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*N. L. Parker*

PERIL IN SECURITY:

A MEMORIAL OF

NATHANIEL EDWARD PARKER,

LATE HOUSE SURGEON TO THE MACCLESFIELD  
DISPENSARY.

BY SAMUEL WILTON RIX.

"How read we such sad scenes? As sent to man  
In perfect vengeance? No; in pity sent,  
To melt him down, like wax, and then impress,  
Indelible, death's image on his heart;  
Bleeding for others, trembling for himself."

Second Edition, Enlarged.

LONDON:

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J. M. BURTON, PRINTER, TAVERN STREET, IPSWICH.



TO F. F. LALLEMAND, ESQ.,

SURGEON, MACCLESFIELD.

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My dear Sir,

You are aware that the following pages were originally designed to preserve and improve the memory of Mr. Parker within the circle of his relatives and friends.

An unpublished edition has been exhausted, and in many instances has proved insufficient to supply the required copies.

The sketch is from real life—not marked by striking incident, or embellished by the pencil of romance. It tells the tale of many an amiable and sanguine young man—of not a few, probably, over the wreck of whose earthly prospects no ray of better hope has been known to dawn.

An assurance that, in one instance at least, the narrative has been the means of inducing the most salutary impressions, has encouraged a hope that, by the blessing of God, it may also be rendered useful to others. This is

my only apology for inviting public attention to a memorial which bears the aspect of a family record, and professes to have been reared by the hand of affection, not of power.

In respectfully dedicating it to you, I am giving but a faint expression to the gratitude warmly cherished by my lamented relative, and which lives in the hearts of those of his earlier friends and kindred who, amidst the inroads of mortality, still survive.

You will not be disposed to censure severely the imperfections of this attempt to revive his image, and to catch and record the solemn message from his early grave.

Believe me, my dear Sir,

Yours faithfully,

S. WILTON RIX.

*Beccles, July, 1844.*

# PERIL IN SECURITY:

A MEMORIAL OF

NATHANIEL EDWARD PARKER.

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THE story of a young man, endowed with mental energy and amiable qualities, sacrificing his life in the study or practice of the medical profession, is seldom deemed worthy of a permanent record. Survivors, under such a dispensation of providence, too often indulge unqualified regret, or are content to express a faint concurrence in the sentiment that all has been ordained in wisdom. Nearer friends and relatives weep at first over their disappointed hopes ; but new objects and duties present themselves, and memory at length almost ceases to linger where so much of darkness gathers around her footsteps.

Yet there are seasons when the remembrance of the dead, awakened by some hidden train of

associations, *will* come over the soul, recalling past scenes with strange vividness. Who does not desire to cherish that remembrance? And who does not feel, amidst all the corroding influences of life, the need of retouching the legend which we once imagined the heart could never cease to retain in all its freshness?

Nor should the process end in unprofitable sentimentalism. Such an one cannot have lived, and panted after knowledge, and grasped it, and then have died, in vain. There was, doubtless, some purpose for which it was worthy of infinite wisdom and goodness thus to have raised him up and cut him off. May it not have been that what in him was excellent and lovely should not only be remembered but imitated, and that his career and removal should become a beacon to warn others of the snares into which he fell, or the perils from which he was "scarcely saved?"

He must not be forgotten, nor remembered only with unavailing sorrow. By the very event we so much deplore he may have been mercifully and eternally sheltered from every ill; and God may have taken him from the post of usefulness on earth in order to render him an instrument of far higher and wider good. If the circumstances be common, the duty is surely not the less imperative to hearken to their

admonitory voice; and the mystery involved should rather stimulate than retard our diligence in seeking after the lessons they may have been intended to convey.

NATHANIEL EDWARD PARKER, the eldest son of Nathaniel and Hannah Parker of Redenhall with Harleston, Norfolk, was born there on the 24th of February, 1811, and died under the same roof on the 31st of October, 1840.

In his tenderest years he was, both in person and disposition, "a pleasant child." An observant eye could perceive the germs of intelligence and fortitude united with much gentleness and docility; and it is interesting, after the lapse of years, to recur to those early indications, trivial as, apart from the subsequent development of character, they may appear. It happened one evening, while he was yet a lisping infant, that after Nathaniel was in bed, the neighbourhood was visited by a severe tempest. Amidst the pealing thunder he heard by his bedside that gentle footstep which to a child's heart is sweetest music. Disturbed, but not terrified, he inquired, "Mother, who is making that noise?" Such an occasion for directing the mind to the majesty of the great God, was not lost. "Well, mother," said the artless child, after listening to her answer, "I wish you

would go and *ask the great God* not to make that noise, for Na' can't sleep."——Ah, how much do we need, in more mature years, to "become as little children," in simple faith and prompt recourse to prayer in time of trouble!

His parents were sensible of the advantages of a liberal education and extensive knowledge. But they desired that their son should be good rather than great. Accordingly their example and instructions alike tended rather to retain him within a humble and limited sphere of respectable usefulness than to draw him forth into the glare and competition of the world. It was very soon manifest, however, that he was not destined readily to settle down to the level of accidental circumstances. Though long held within a narrow circle, he moved, even in his childhood, on the plane of superior minds. His chosen amusements—and amusements are generally an index to character—looked towards manhood and enterprise more than is common among boys thrown by birth into rural localities.

The din of arms which had shaken the kingdoms of Europe had but recently died away. The child's ear caught the spirit of the times whilst listening to the conversation of the fire-side, and the description of war given by a servant who had been in the engagement at



Waterloo. His eye kindled at the sight of a father's accoutrements when occasionally he joined his troop of yeomanry cavalry, then undisbanded. And the hand was soon employed in an attempt to embody the glowing picture by dressing Lilliputian figures of wood in military costume, arming, mounting, and arranging them in troops. Often at the peril of punishment did our little hero transgress the limits of his play-ground to test the correctness of his representations and to acquire additional information by conversing with the *ci-devant* soldier. At length, in order to give a greater show of life and reality to the hitherto silent drama, he introduced small brass cannon, and drawing up his artillery in a part of the garden least exposed to notice, brought it to bear upon the mimic enemy, with increased glee and with palpable effect. This was soon prohibited, and a sense of filial duty divested the amusement of its charms.

Still following in the steps of men, he turned his attention with similar ardour to the more peaceful amusement of agriculture. Having gained permission to set apart a corner of the garden for his own use, he divided it into patches, planting them with appropriate varieties of grain, according to the most approved course of Norfolk husbandry, and erecting barns and other buildings of suitable dimensions.

Constantly he had some absorbing occupation, not merely of unmeaning pastime, but partaking of a scientific or intellectual character. Among these must not be forgotten the inclination early evinced towards the profession on which he afterwards entered. Although yet a stranger to the wonders of anatomy, he employed colonies of ants in preparing skeletons of birds and other small animals, and carefully preserved the skull of a favourite dog as his chosen memento of long-tried fidelity.

While the mind, naturally vigorous, was thus exhibiting its bias and educating itself, neither his intellectual nor his moral faculties had been left uncultivated. In his fourteenth year he became a pupil in a school at Palgrave, Suffolk, conducted by the Rev. Charles Valentine. While so occupied, Nathaniel Parker was often noticed as a beautiful example of steady application and of obliging and amiable demeanour. There were, especially, in his bearing, an unaffected and manly frankness, and a guileless transparency, conferring a polish very superior to the tinsel of acquired mannerism. He was a model of the real politeness one desires to see in a school-boy, that which springs from singleness of mind and a disinterested and almost involuntary desire to please.

On leaving school he applied, with renewed

zeal, though amidst many discouragements, to literary and scientific disputes, devoting to them a great proportion of his leisure hours. Practical mechanics having engaged his attention, he added to a complete set of simple tools a lathe, and amused himself with turning various articles for service and ornament. The lathe was followed by an electrical apparatus, to which he contrived to render the former an useful appendage for communicating the necessary rapidity to the cylinder. Electricity led to chemistry, in some branches of which science he acquired no despicable amount of practical knowledge. Botany, which he had better opportunities of studying with success, had its turn. With a companion of similar taste, or wandering alone among the oft-neglected beauty of woods and hedge-rows, he made a collection of grasses, diligently studying and arranging them at the evening hour. Some of the species he was at great pains to grow for himself, in order correctly to ascertain the flower.

The kind and judicious friend on whose ministry he attended, and by whom these spontaneous efforts were noticed with pleasure, indulged and regulated his appetite for reading by supplying him with a succession of valuable books. That friend he would accompany in his walks, listening to any useful hint with the deference

and thankfulness due to a spiritual guide and an intellectual father.

He had always some book in reading. Nor did he lay aside with his satchel, as too many do, those which were elementary. Having acquired at school a respectable proficiency in the French language, and being desirous of improving his acquaintance with Latin, he would sometimes write down in the evening, a passage from the New Testament in the latter language, and in a parallel column a French version to assist him in its study on the following day when resuming a manual occupation.

It is worthy of being recorded that he could not be justly charged with allowing his favourite studies or amusements to encroach upon the time properly belonging to less agreeable *duties*. Nor was he tempted to manifest anything like pedantry or arrogance. Towards servants, in particular, he invariably exercised a becoming courtesy, while his superior information and good sense invested him with dignity and influence, and secured for him a respect far more valuable than are commanded either by low familiarity or an overbearing demeanour.

He early engaged as a Sunday school teacher, and, until he was removed to a distance, filled up efficiently his part in those useful labours.

While he was thus availing himself of the

advantages within his reach, and cheerfully attending to present duty, his soul aspired to other scenes and occupations. Numerous and diversified were the schemes which presented themselves to his busy mind. Among the more feasible was that of obtaining an appointment in some public office in London. Kind exertions were made on his behalf with this design, but they proved unavailing. Nor did they receive great encouragement from his parents. By them the peculiar activity of his mind was watched with the anxious foreboding and the keen perception of danger which only a parent knows. They were apprehensive of the injury his health might sustain in the exchange of active for sedentary employment. He, too, felt that in such a position he must have been content to take his place, day by day, "as only one cog in a great wheel." Sometimes he thought of emigration. But every other project was readily abandoned when, after several years, the prospect of embarking in the medical profession opened before him, and with it the hope of realizing the fondest desire of his early youth.

His original idea was to have placed himself apprentice to a surgeon in London. But besides other difficulties to be encountered, his health was not robust, and his modest estimate of his own powers led him, at first, to apprehend that,

entering the profession later in life than is usual, he should never rise to a respectable position; and he could not endure the thought of resting below mediocrity. "He mentioned his fears many times to me," says one of his brothers, "before he went from home, and I believe if he had not at last assured himself of attaining, one day, to eminence in his profession, he could never have reconciled his mind to entering upon it."

When at length a relative at St. Neots in Huntingdonshire proposed to receive him as a medical pupil and inmate, the assent of his parents was given with trembling. Not that they had any misgivings as to his being worthy of such encouragement or ready to improve it with diligence; for with him industry had already become a habit, and he had never been the guilty cause of one hour's uneasiness to them: but they felt that their son was entering upon a course which might result in worldly advantage with all its allurements—perhaps in extended usefulness—possibly in early death—or, infinitely more fearful, in moral ruin. For himself he had little fear on these subjects. A new era had dawned upon him. It was now that he saw, to use his own phrase, his "way clear for a beginning." All his past life seemed to him as lost time, and every hour of the future



he regarded as deriving from that consideration accumulated value.

With the utmost eagerness he entered upon the scene so congenial with his taste. Nor did his energy abate when this first and important step was taken. He became at once deeply impressed with the responsibility which awaits the individual to whom the lives of others are intrusted. His diligence and application were remarkable. Seldom did he entirely lose even an odd minute. Placed with one who felt a real interest in his welfare, anxious to overtake the time which had elapsed, resting his hope of success entirely upon his own perseverance, and setting out on his professional education with a mind comparatively mature and yet eminently docile, his improvement was alike rapid and substantial.

His delight in the accomplishment of his object was almost unbounded. "Here I am," he writes, "in my surgery, third in command, most heartily congratulating myself on having attained a situation for which I was always most anxious, of which for years I had nearly despaired, and which, now gained, I would not exchange with any." Merging for a time the privileges of consanguinity, he preferred in all respects to take his place and depend upon his conduct as a pupil. Meanwhile his manly,

intelligent, and amiable character soon won him the esteem of all with whom he became associated. Few medical students have enjoyed so large a share of confidence, respect, and esteem, and few have been more deserving of it.

In the autumn of 1836, Mr. Parker became a student at the Westminster Hospital. His hearty love of the profession, a sense of duty, and gratitude to those who had placed some peculiar advantages in his path, alike prompted him to constant and sedulous application. Neither the public amusements of London, nor the attractions of private hospitality and social intercourse, could divert him from the strict course of industry he had prescribed to himself. He fixed his eye on one object and pursued it with an energy and delight which fully justified his own declaration on his death-bed, "London was no temptation to *me*."

Creditable and exemplary as these habits would have been, if wisely regulated, he soon incurred the penalty of having permitted them far to exceed the bounds of prudence. Contrary to the advice which had been given him on going to London, he took inordinate exercise on foot, and debarred himself of the generous diet which his physical and mental exertions rendered indispensable to his health. The consequence was that before the winter had passed

he was attacked with typhus fever, which broke up his strength and laid the foundation for an early death. The utmost anxiety was felt by his relatives to alleviate his malady and to promote his restoration; but the disease speedily assumed a formidable and then an imminently dangerous form.

He had long been aware that the life of a medical student in London hangs upon a brittle thread. With regard to the present world he had little cause for anxiety. But there was one affair which awfully alarmed him—he felt that he was unprepared for death. During many months his profession had absorbed his thoughts and occupied his time. For it he had sacrificed health and endangered life, and it seemed likely a few hours would land him in eternity. To this subject his attention was invited, with the fidelity and prudence his critical circumstances demanded, by a friend for whose watchful and kind attention in that season of distress he ever after manifested a deep sense of gratitude. His neglect of religion, and especially of prayer, now occasioned him the bitterest lamentation. He was a pattern of every thing amiable in the sight of his fellow creatures; but how slender a source of consolation was this to him who felt that he had *forgotten God!* He looked beyond the grave, and all was dark and fearful. Re-

ferring to a friend's unremitting care during one night of extreme danger, he exclaimed in an agony, "*Where* should I now have been but for your kindness !"

It was not too late to seek for mercy ; but the hand of sickness was heavy upon him, and he complained that he found it "difficult to pray." On being reminded of the publican's petition, "God be merciful to me a sinner," Luke xviii. 13, he said, "Yes, that will do for me." Cowper's beautiful hymn, beginning

"There is a fountain fill'd with blood,"

was read to him. When it was concluded, he exclaimed, "Oh, if I could but appropriate that language to myself how happy should I be !" The case of the penitent thief on the cross was mentioned, and some observations made, designed to impress upon his mind the truth that the same fountain was still open. He listened with deep attention and interest, and after a long silence remarked, "I have been thinking about what you said of the penitent thief ;—but then he was so *peculiarly situated*." A few verses of the third chapter of John's gospel were read to him, and seemed to afford a little comfort. He said, "Then there is some hope for me." At another time, adverting to the new aspect religion had assumed when viewed from

the border of the grave, he observed, "I never till now thought of the meaning of that hymn,

'When I can read my title clear.'"

The next day he was visited by a kind-hearted and excellent minister whom he had long known, and who prayed with him and directed him to the only Saviour. On taking leave this friend said, "I shall pray for you." To which he eagerly replied, "Pray that I may be *taught to pray* for myself." A few hours afterwards a powerless stupor came on. Being asked if he could think at all, he answered, "No; I have been trying, but it is of no use; *I can't think.*" In this state he remained—while spectators alternately hoped and trembled—till the crisis of the disease was past. He gradually recovered; and his friends saw, not without sorrow, that he returned to the world, with undiminished eagerness and zeal—an affecting instance, as it seemed, of the evanescent and fallacious character of a sick-bed repentance.

The following extracts from a letter he received soon after his recovery will form an appropriate comment upon this part of the narrative.

.... "In the transient interview I had with you, among the many voices and the many faces that welcomed you, there seemed no space

left for the ‘small still voice’ in which I longed to offer my affectionate congratulations on your recovery—a recovery which seemed to me almost like life from the dead, and which I am inclined to suppose, from your own medical knowledge of the nature and often fatal issue of such maladies, must, at the time when you were first pronounced convalescent, have appeared so to yourself. Yet so it is.

“You lay prostrate and passive in the hands of a divine providence, ever vigilant and overruling all, which had determined to chasten but not to destroy you, which placed you gently on your bed of sickness, surrounded by every comfort that you needed, and ministered to by those who knew how not only to give the frequent cordial to the sinking frame, but to present the ‘balm of Gilead’ to the wounded spirit. It seems too that, amidst the utter prostration of the body, the mind was long sustained in a state of clearness and self-possession not very usual. What a combination of distinguished mercies were blended with this warning dispensation! And all crowned by that voice which alone could arrest the hand of death and say to his anticipated victim, ‘live!’

“My dear Nathaniel, did not that voice say *more* than this? Was not its language, ‘he shall not die, but live *and glorify me?*’ Has



this view of a season which filled all your relatives with so much painful suspense and alarm seriously occupied your mind since your return to health and active life? I do not ask what were your views and feelings as you lay outstretched and helpless, the grave yawning at your feet, and an untried eternity beyond it. I am sure the instructions of your early childhood, the example and memory of relatives who have died 'in the Lord,' and the conversations, guidance, advice, and affectionate interest of your dear and excellent pastor, must have passed before you, in broken and partial glimpses perhaps, yet fraught with many solemn and profitable hints respecting the comparative scenes of time and eternity, the preparation you had made for this momentous hour, the sentence which awaited you, the ground of the sinner's hope, and your own *personal* interest in the great salvation which is by Jesus Christ.

"No young man having the religious *knowledge* you possess, and retaining his rational powers, *can* lie down 'to die as the fool dieth,' forgetful of the past, reckless of the future, and scarcely conscious of a nature superior to that of the brutes that perish. Such indifference, I am inclined to believe, is either felt or feigned by many, especially of your profession, when the unwelcome summons comes and snatches them

from the researches of science or the vortex of pleasure. Having lived 'without God in the world,' they die shrouded in a dreamy unconsciousness of spiritual danger, a most fearful prelude of that 'blackness of darkness' which must be the portion of all those who virtually deny God and reject the Saviour. Now it seems to me that you, who have been the recipient of such distinguished mercies, are by these very mercies brought under great and peculiar responsibilities.

"There is no doubt that God's designs in restoring you were mercy and peace. But you are a free agent. He now sets before you, anew, life and death, not natural but spiritual life and death; and he says to you in language not to be misunderstood, 'Choose you this day whom you will serve.' He waits to be gracious. He waits to strengthen your weakness, to watch over your infirmity, to fan 'the smoking flax,' to bind up 'the bruised reed,' to cherish 'the day of small things,' to confirm the first feeble desires of your heart. But if you disregard these overtures of paternal tenderness, if you turn away and plunge, I do not say into vice, but, into secular pursuits, whether of pleasure or of science, you do it at a peril to your soul's safety, greatly enhanced by your late circumstances.

“The case is this. You surround yourself with your books, your instruments, your demonstrations; you rise early and sit up late, and give your undivided attention to this one object. But what says God?—‘Be diligent in business, *serving the Lord*; have I not just proved to you that in a moment I can arrest your hand, confound your reasoning powers, and suspend your most commendable exertions? And was it not to teach you that there are still higher duties and a far more important interest to be regarded? But my Spirit will not always strive with man: he that, being often reprovèd, hardeneth his heart, shall perish and that suddenly.’ I hope, my dear Nathaniel, you will bear with me if I write plainly; I am sure I do it affectionately and with at least a kind intention. The experience of fifty years has taught me much of the deceitfulness of the human heart. I well remember my own recovery from an illness which every one thought would have been fatal, and how surprised and confounded I felt, even in the slight and transient self-examination which I then exercised, to find how evanescent were all the resolutions and impressions then made and received; nay, how fleeting even the remembrance of my *sufferings* seemed to be when I returned to life and renovated strength, and all the pleasures and

hopes and pursuits of opening years. I look back upon that period of my life as one of most wilful negligence and ingratitude, and as calling for special humiliation, while I bless God that he has, though by many bitter sorrows, at length taught me in some measure the true design of affliction. And I would fain light the friendly beacon for one whom I love, one in whose studies and success I take a most lively interest, while I would still remind him that, even if his best earthly hopes be realized, wealth and honour are insufficient to confer happiness when unattended by real personal religion, and that the words of him who never erred are very explicit and very awful in their import, ‘What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?’

.... “It has often occurred to me that medical practitioners have much more extensive means of doing good to their fellow creatures than any other class of men. Their resources ought to consist in skill, benevolence, and personal religion; these united and producing their legitimate results open a wide scene of usefulness before them indeed. I have no doubt, if it please God to prolong your life, your skill may be relied on, and that, in spite of the petrifying influence of your profession, in your case benevolence will be her willing

handmaid, and soothe and soften the pains you must inflict. May the grace of God invest you with the third and highest qualification for usefulness, and how thrice happy will be your own state, how incalculably valuable your exertions by the bed of sickness and even of death !”

As soon as he was able, Mr. Parker revisited the scene of his professional toils and pleasures ; and very reluctantly did he consent to leave London for a short time in search of health, remarking that never before had he gone down to see his friends with such an aching heart. Though strongly urged to abandon study for the remainder of the season, he returned to town early in March, 1837, having, as he imagined, completely recovered his strength, “heartily tired, not of the country, but of an idle life,” and full of exultation in the idea of regaining his “own element in the *ensanguined plains* of Westminster.”

Notwithstanding his illness he obtained, in the following month, the second prize, “given by Mr. North and Mr. Griffith, for the excellence and superiority of his answers to the list of questions proposed for the Midwifery class” at the Westminster Hospital School of Medicine.

Finding it impracticable to carry into effect

a design he had entertained of making a voyage to America during the summer, he passed the greater part of it at St. Neots, delighting to continue in the midst of medical pursuits while enjoying the benefit of country air. He was always welcome there as a visitor; for his ardent zeal in his profession did not render him less amiable or energetic when circumstances beyond its pale called for the exercise of benevolence or courage. He had acquired by early habit great capability of physical exertion; and it was exhibited, not in useless feats, but often in subservience to the great object of his ambition—sometimes in conjunction with an exemplary coolness of judgment and nobleness of heart. One evening, in the course of this visit, being suddenly informed that a young gentleman had sunk while bathing in the river Ouse, he hastened to the spot, and though he had been long unaccustomed to the water he continued for three quarters of an hour to dive in successive portions of the stream, traversing its bed from side to side, in search of the unfortunate youth, and only ceased his exertions on the urgent remonstrance of the by-standers, to whom it was apparent, from his shivering and cramp, that his own life was in extreme peril.

After spending a few weeks with his Norfolk



friends, during which period his books were not entirely laid aside, he resumed in the autumn his attendance at Westminster, with very imperfectly restored health, but eagerly looking forward to "a long campaign."

As the evidence and result of his exertions he received, on the close of the session, prizes in four of the seven classes to which he was attached at the School of Medicine already mentioned; bearing away the only prize in Medicine, the first in Midwifery, and others of the second rank in Practical Anatomy and Surgery. He thus refers to the subject in writing to an intimate friend, his medical instructor in the country:—

"And what do you say to my list of honours? I do not think you can complain much, after all. I confess it was much more than I had dreamed of doing, and I assure you there is nothing about the matter which gives me more pleasure than to be able to show you that all the pains and trouble you have expended upon me have not entirely been thrown away. At Anatomy and Physiology I did nothing, as you see. I only went in 'nothing venture nothing win.' It was a very stiff examination, and all Physiology. There were only five who sat it out; and I have since privately ascertained that my papers were third,

which I hardly expected, as I was quite unprepared for such an examination. Midwifery was the subject on which I staked all my reputation. I felt sure I was a match for my comrades at any rate in that department, though eight entered the lists against me, and amongst them two surgeon-accoucheurs in full practice. Altogether, I was exceedingly anxious about this; and guess my disappointment when I found myself hardly able to sit up on the day, from a dreadful headache. However, on the *settling* day I was much pleased, as soon as I saw the papers on the table, to recognise the two words of my motto at the distance, and on the same paper, '*First Prize.*' This quite put me at ease, and I awarded the others with calm resignation! Before my motto was announced I was a little flattered by Mr. North, who stated that Dr. S——, to whom, as a stranger to all the candidates, the papers had been handed for inspection, had decided that several papers on Midwifery were highly creditable to their authors, but that there was *one* fortunate individual who had the honour, certainly, of preeminently distinguishing himself; and he rejoiced in the opportunity of telling that unknown individual that his answers were of a kind highly gratifying to his teacher, as evincing not only a knowledge of that depart-

ment of the profession, but a thorough and correct acquaintance with its principles ; and he would proceed to say the motto was, ‘Cui bono?’—Imagine how I winced !

“Then, after *Materia Medica* and Chemistry, came Dr. Burne, who announced that he had determined to give one good prize in Medicine instead of two of inferior value ; which grieved me sore, as I fancied I might perhaps stand some little chance of the second, but felt sure that I could not cope with T——. The doctor then mentioned one of the bundles of answers as much more *perfect* than the rest, (‘Oh, that T——!’ quoth I;) and one which he must say afforded him much gratification, as he hardly expected to find amongst them so correct an account of the causes, symptoms, treatment, and pathology of disease ; (‘That fellow T——!’ said I again;) and as a proof he would announce that he had set a complete and perfect series of answers to the questions at a certain number of marks, and that these papers had reached that number within three. My anxiety was quite gone, from the conviction that they were T——’s, when the doctor added, that the motto was ‘Non quo sed quomodo’—which was mine. And on he went in a speech directed to me, which I was heartily glad to get over, about ‘continued exertions’ and ‘honours and emoluments ;’ but as I was very

nervous that week, I fortunately did not connect the sentences so as to derive much injury from the excitation of vanity. I positively did not know whether I was on my head or heels!"

In a letter of somewhat later date, after referring to other less successful aspirants, he says, "I most freely confess to you that I no more deserved those prizes than you do who never wrote a word. If there had been a week or two allowed for reading, as at some schools, I should not have appeared; and the reason that I succeeded was this, they suddenly called us up, just as we were, a week before it was at all expected, and continued the examinations during the session, which put us entirely on our own resources and allowed no time for brushing up; and this was what saved me, I assure you, as I had not been able to read for a month previously." An explanation which shows very plainly how well he was prepared to meet the sudden call upon his stores of information and powers of mind, and how justly he was entitled to the marks of distinction awarded to him.

He had recently attended the surgical practice at St. George's Hospital, and in June, 1838, was appointed dresser to Mr. Babington, a circumstance the more creditable, as the dresserships there are understood to be given to those pupils who have shown themselves to be the most industrious and competent.

In the following month he became a member of the Royal College of Surgeons, having passed an examination, in the course of which he contested several points with the learned examiners, and displayed no want of just confidence in the advantages he had derived from diligent study and the habit of careful observation. "I told them," he says, referring to one of these subjects of discussion, "that as my opinion was not merely formed from that of others expressed in books, but from actual dissections and the instruction of those well competent to teach, I hoped they would excuse my saying that I had no doubt whatever of the correctness of my theory, and gave it them because I believed it."....."I apologized when I was leaving the table for the liberty I had taken in expressing my opinion so freely; when they smiled and told me I was quite right in having done it. I can most truly say I very reluctantly left the room, so pleasant had it become."....."I did not know Sir Astley Cooper when at his table, but he came and spoke to me afterwards, asked me whether I had ever studied at Dublin, and applauded the plan and expressed his opinion of the feasibility of students learning anatomy during their apprenticeship. This was occasioned by my making them laugh at the first table, by saying that I learned the bones during

the first three months of my apprenticeship, and that my master always made it a rule to teach his pupils anatomy as a recreation !”

Mr. Parker’s truly estimable character, as it was exhibited in the circle of his own family, received a fresh illustration when, in the ensuing autumn, he was found watching the death-bed of one of that circle, an uncle residing at Islington. Beyond expression and above praise were the kindness and attention he there manifested, contributing alike by his personal qualities and his medical attainments to the comfort of those whose hearts were growing desolate under the loss of a husband and a father. It was the death of the “upright” whose end is “peace,” of one by whom he had been pointedly admonished as to the great concern of an immortal being, and whose last articulate words were that he was “very comfortable and happy.” In contrast with his own awful fears, he saw there how a true christian could die.

Upon himself life appeared to be opening with prospects more extended and flattering as he advanced. Several engagements in London and elsewhere, not without pecuniary advantages, were offered to him. He had been urgently invited by a popular and valuable lecturer to undertake in connexion with himself the office of



Demonstrator of Anatomy, a proposal such as is perhaps seldom made to a young man within five years after his first entering upon the profession. Independently of the state of his health, which had rendered its acceptance undesirable, he could not be convinced that he was properly qualified for the duties of the office ; and he was desirous rather of devoting himself to physicians' practice and to the studies which would prepare him more thoroughly for passing the examination at Apothecaries' Hall. In the almost immediate prospect of encountering that ordeal, he even declined to engage in private practice. During the early part of his career he had entertained the notion that for this he should be quite prepared when he had become a member of the learned corporate bodies immediately connected with his profession ; but towards the close of his studies he thought otherwise. The desire of knowledge, like the love of money, increases with its possession ; and great attainments are usually united with proportionate modesty.

“Most certainly,” Mr. Parker frankly observed, “I never was so thoroughly impressed with my own ignorance and emptiness, as since the learned body have pronounced me ‘fit and capable to practise the art and science of Surgery.’ I now discover my error, and have come to the determination not to enter upon private

practice at present, but to get into a situation that will combine the advantages of plenty of practice so concentrated as to leave time for the study of the literature of my profession and general literature à la fois, and also an opportunity of pursuing the study of Morbid Anatomy. Now this is not because I am so modest as to believe that I am more ignorant than most medical students. I fancy myself quite as good as the generality of that learned body ; but am satisfied *that* is not enough, or nearly enough, to ensure a certainty of the respect and standing, both from the public and my professional brethren, which I believe essential to my happiness. Well, this being the case, the sort of thing which presented itself was of course the house-surgeoncy of a country infirmary for two or three years. Then with what confidence I could take a situation of any responsibility, and, I hope, do justice both to myself and my patients wherever they may be."

He had thought of entering the navy or the East India Company's service, and would by no means have shrunk from spending a portion of his life abroad. But these views were abandoned from various considerations, among which filial deference was not without its weight. He never allowed himself to brood anxiously over his prospects, nor gave way to despondency when his schemes were thwarted. And while

he longed for incessant occupation, and for more extensive experience, prudence inclined him towards the wiser course of seeking a temporary engagement, where his duties would be less onerous, and he might recruit his health after the termination of his London toils. A situation of this kind was presented to his notice, and early in 1839 we find him preparing to offer himself as a candidate for the resident surgery to an infirmary in Wiltshire.

With this view, he adopted the usual course of obtaining written testimonials from various professors and lecturers. Perhaps an undue degree of importance is sometimes attached to such documents; and it may be conceded that their relative value can be best estimated when somewhat is known from other sources of the individual to whom they relate, as well as of those by whom they have been given. No one who was acquainted with Mr. Parker would suspect that arrogance had any share in preferring his claims. He was conscious of having "attempted great things," and he stood in the dignified position of one who seeks to convey to strangers the assurance of honourable facts, not the false colouring of favouritism, or the loose assertions of mere civility. The value of his testimonials was greatly enhanced by this consideration. They were numerous, and couched

in the highest terms of esteem for his personal character and confidence in his professional attainments and success. Sir Benjamin Brodie stated, without hesitation, that he believed few individuals, at the termination of their studies, were so well qualified as Mr. Parker was, to practise their profession. Dr. Burne, Physician to the Westminster Hospital, who had known him during the whole of the time he had spent in London, represented him as having been "a most attentive, regular, industrious, well conducted student;" adding, "his professional acquirements are superior, and his private character without blemish."

About the same time he received his certificate as a Licentiate of the society of Apothecaries. On that occasion his qualifications underwent a rigid scrutiny. He was examined, successively, in his knowledge of Prescriptions, Natural Philosophy, Chemistry, Materia Medica, the Practice of Physic, Physiology, Botany, and Anatomy. And having encountered this ordeal without any express preparation for it, his answers in some of its branches were unsatisfactory to the examiners. He pleaded that to Natural Philosophy and Botany he had not recently been able to devote much time, though he had formerly given a good deal of attention to them, and with regard to other subjects that,

working by himself, he had not been accustomed to answering or become expert at description. But his mortification was increased tenfold by the stern rejoinder that he had either had no advantages or had been idle. Probably there are few medical students in London of whom the very reverse in both points could have been affirmed with greater truth. At the close of the examination he was informed that he would have his certificate, but the court must be made acquainted with his ignorance of *Botany*! He then rose, and requesting to be allowed to say a few words, remarked that he was quite aware he had answered very badly in some parts of the examination; that on many occasions it had not been so much from ignorance as confusion; but that he was quite unwilling to receive any shelter on the ground of having been either idle or without advantages; that the latter he had received in a considerable degree, and that for the last five years he had never lost the slightest opportunity of improving them. This incident was very illustrative of his character, and therefore is not withheld. Probably his remark was prompted even more by a feeling of gratitude and justice towards his instructors than by conscious merit and self-respect.

The situation to which allusion has been made was obtained without difficulty; but Mr.

Parker never entered upon its duties, having soon afterwards resigned it in favour of his predecessor, through whose kindness his attention had been directed to it, and who was disappointed in the engagement he had been expecting. This occurrence revived Mr. Parker's desire to seek for employment in some wider and more active scene. He immediately offered himself as a candidate for the office of house surgeon to the Dispensary at Macclesfield. From a medical friend in London, to whom an acquaintance of a few months had sufficiently made known his worth, he obtained an advantageous introduction, and proceeded into Cheshire in order to reconnoitre and to announce his intention. The impression produced upon his mind was by no means favourable, when his eye first met the pale faces and fumid atmosphere of a large manufacturing town, surrounded by bleak hills, over which spring had not yet thrown her verdant mantle. He even hesitated as to prosecuting his design; but on further consideration resolved to persevere, recollecting that the time for which he was required to engage was only three years, and much encouraged by a truly hospitable reception, and by assistance alike prompt and efficient. After having submitted his claims, in a personal canvass and through his testimonials, to the trustees



and other subscribers, he returned to London with little cause for apprehension as to his success, and delighted with the field for practice which had thus opened before him. He was elected by a very flattering majority of votes, although the qualifications of his competitor justly called forth the warmest praise. The result was not ascertained, however, until several weeks after Mr. Parker's first visit to Macclesfield.

His destination being at length decided upon, he hastened to see his relatives and friends in the eastern counties, and to glance at familiar scenes from which there was every probability of his being long removed. To many of these scenes this was his last visit; to those friends the prospect of so distant a separation was attended with much anxiety and pain. Some, taught by long experience of the vanity of earthly hope, rejoiced with reserve in the success which had attended his career; while those of his own standing in life felt that one of the brightest ornaments of their circle was to be taken far away, and found the reflection of the poet springing up in their saddened hearts—

“How often is our path  
Crossed by some being, whose bright spirit sheds  
A passing gladness o'er it, but whose course  
Leads down another current, never more

To blend with ours ! yet far within our soul,  
Amidst the rushing of the busy world,  
Dwells many a secret thought which lingers still  
Around that image."

Among the many tokens he received of affection, and of anxiety for his temporal and eternal welfare, he afterwards repeatedly noticed, with the liveliest interest and gratitude, the following letter from the friend and pastor of his youth. With it he received a copy of Dr. Dick's "Philosophy of a Future State."

"Denton, June 15th, 1839.

"My dear Nathaniel,

"It will, I fear, be a considerable time before I have again the pleasure of seeing you, and it is possible we may meet no more ere that day when 'the trumpet shall sound.' While requesting your acceptance of the volume which accompanies these lines, suffer me to express for you those feelings of affection which have grown with your growth and strengthened with your strength. I have known you from your infancy, through your childhood and youth, and now I see you arrived at mature years. I have experienced many kind and gratifying attentions from you, which leave a pleasing impression that will not be effaced ; and if I have been an instrument, in

former years, of contributing in any measure to your advancement in useful knowledge, I am thankful, and only regret that I have done no more for your present and eternal good.

“I have no intention to write the language of flattery, yet I cannot but rejoice in your present respectability and in all your professional prospects. I trust, my dear friend, you will not be satisfied with the knowledge, whatever its extent, which must cease with time, nor with the honour which will not survive the grave. May it be your earnest, your daily desire and prayer that you may possess much of that knowledge which is ‘the excellency of knowledge,’ that you may have an interest in that precious Saviour, ‘whom to know is life eternal,’ taking your place among those who are most devoted to his sacred will; that you may at length meet with those eminent servants of God from whom you, above many, are favoured with such an honourable descent.

“You are exposed to not a few spiritual dangers. You will probably come in contact with some who are the advocates of a cold and heartless infidelity, the end of which has horror no pen can describe. You will be exposed to other snares. My earnest prayer is that you may be preserved. Manifest a holy decision of character under all circumstances, and be faithful

even unto death. I do indeed long to meet you, in due time, before the throne of God and the Lamb, and from the purest motives beseech you to live near to God, ever honouring, consulting, and following his sacred word, passing no day without earnest prayer, and the active recollection of that eye which beholds you at every season. God mercifully appeared for you in the hour of imminent danger ; he heard supplication for you ; he had mercy upon you—and upon us also. May you devote yourself to him, cleaving to him with full purpose of heart !

“ I trust you will take in kindness the counsels of a very old friend. I feel as if I could not part with you but in this manner, and I hope, though many miles will soon separate us, we shall meet before the throne of him who hears the prayers of his children.

“ I much wish I had Dr. Pearson’s Life of Mr. Hey, many years an eminent surgeon and an eminent christian at Leeds. If I had it I would put it into your hands. About sixteen years since I read it with much delight.

“ Farewell, my dear friend. God preserve, guide, and bless you, till all the scenes of earth, so mixed, shall terminate in the bliss of that world where not a single danger shall be found.

“ I am, very affectionately yours,

EDWARD HICKMAN.”

The writer of this letter—himself tracing his “proud pretensions” through several generations of truly reverend men, and claiming to be

“The son of parents passed into the skies”—

was well able to sympathize with the train of associations which his allusion to the pious dead would not fail to awaken. The mind of our friend would especially recur to the name of his paternal great grandfather, Mr. Joseph Parker, a humble christian, and an amiable, judicious, upright, indefatigable man, not unworthy of a passing notice here, nor of the situations he long filled as amanuensis to Dr. Isaac Watts, and confidential steward to the Lady Abney and Mrs. Elizabeth Abney at Stoke Newington. He imbibed much of the spirit of the distinguished individual, whom “by an uncommon favour of Providence,” he was permitted to serve for upwards of twenty-one years, whom he found to be “the best of masters and the kindest of friends,” and whose last moments he personally watched with the assiduity and devotedness, the joy and the grief, befitting such a death-bed. The “trusty and diligent servant” survived his “beloved master” many years, during which he was much, and not undeservedly, honoured with the correspondence and confidence of the wise and good. Perhaps the most conspicuous fea-

ture of his character was an unfailing regard to the tender care displayed in the providence of God towards those who humbly and unreservedly trust in him. This state of mind was constantly and forcibly recommended by his example and his counsels. His numerous letters, almost without exception, illustrate this statement; and there are some still living who recollect the unruffled solemnity with which, on receiving, amidst the feebleness of age, the intelligence of the execution of Louis XVI, he raised his hand in the attitude of devotion, and exclaimed, "THE LORD reigneth ; let the earth rejoice !"

His only son was connected by marriage with a family of eminent piety and zeal in the cause of religious liberty, and enjoyed for a period of nearly sixty years the care and counsel and faithful kindness of one who was exemplary in all the varied duties and relations of life—"a happiness which," it was justly remarked on the occasion of her death, "falls to the lot of but few among mankind." Having early entered upon "wisdom's ways," she continued to walk in them with constancy and cheerful tranquillity till she became a lovely specimen of religious old age, and at length descended to the grave with her christian reputation unsullied by a stain. Her venerable partner, naturally



endowed with a vigorous constitution and an active mind—who in his infancy was dedicated to God in the presence of Watts, who mingled with ardour in the stirring political events and benevolent projects of his earlier manhood, who could boast of having conversed with Franklin and enjoyed the acquaintance of Granville Sharp and the philanthropist Howard—reached the age of ninety, and died bearing his unequivocal testimony to the only sure foundation on which, through the vicissitudes of time, he too had rested his hopes for eternity. They lived to see eleven children arrive to maturity, in circumstances that afforded them much comfort. For although one of them was taken away in the bloom of life, when just entering with fair prospects on the medical profession ; and another—their youngest and tenderly beloved daughter—after many weeks of lingering sickness survived her mother but a few days ; yet as both died “in the Lord,” there was joy in their death. Instruction, prayer, and example had not been bestowed on them in vain. Mercies and praises outweighed chastisements and sorrow ; and the inscription near the tomb of the aged parents at Denton expresses the prevailing sentiment of their declining years : “Thou hast dealt well with thy servants, O Lord, according unto thy word.” Ps. cxix. 65.

Many interesting mementoes of the father of christian psalmody had fallen into the hands of his amanuensis; and probably the subject of this memoir, had his life been prolonged, would have inherited the *damask gown* worn by Dr. Watts in his study, and handed down as a sort of heirloom. Happy indeed if the spiritual mantle of a Watts, woven of firm godliness, unbroken zeal, and soft charity, should fall upon the successive possessors of the interesting relic!

It was a favourite position with Mr. Hickman that no effort to do good on christian principles is ever entirely lost; and a confident hope may be indulged that the kind advice tendered, by one so sincerely beloved and respected, to him who was now embarking on the fickle tide of life, was not entirely forgotten nor neglected. Certainly it was not despised. To another friend, who had addressed him in a similar strain, Mr. Parker thus wrote on the day of his leaving London for Macclesfield:—"I feel that I cannot pretend to thank you for your letters as they deserve, but believe that I fully know and appreciate the excellent design which dictated them. They are not the only admonitions of the kind which have attended my departure; and I cannot but reckon those who have the

courage and decision to give them, as friends worthy of the highest place in my esteem, gratitude, and affection."

On the 1st of July he entered upon the duties of his office, having arrived at Macclesfield a week previously. Though in a land of strangers he found himself at once surrounded by all the comforts which hospitality and benevolence could provide ; and the professional contest in which he had been engaged did not preclude his saying with truth, in a *jeu-d'esprit* presently to be noticed,

— "Kind friends I've many ;  
Foes very few, I think, if any."

The following is his own account of the ordinary disposal of his time : "I rise at seven to a minute ; read, look up patients' names to see what they are taking, study their cases, etc., till a quarter past eight ; then breakfast ; precisely at a quarter before nine I begin to see out-patients in the physician's room ; this lasts till about half-past ten or eleven, when I look through the list of what we call 'home patients,' i. e., those who are too ill to come up and are visited at their own houses, and make out a list of their names. We divide the town into *north* and *south*, the patients of which are seen on alternate days by myself and the apprentice.

My half is always much more numerous than his, and I am seldom home before three, sometimes later. Then I dine; and there ends the business of the day, save casualties and patients so ill as to require to be seen twice. With all this apparent time on my hands I am always busy. The different cases require a great deal of reading and study. When necessary I can always summon a consultation, and then I have to give my opinion and state my treatment. Then there are callers and calls to be made; so that time slips away fast."

For several weeks, however, he was enabled to fulfil his engagement with assiduity, and yet occasionally to unbend his mind and invigorate his frame in the enjoyment of society, or of rural or romantic scenery, or in describing to distant correspondents his new position. "I work hard," he says, "when I work;" and this, no doubt, enhanced the pleasure of relaxation. With delight he refers to visits at Gawsorth, a neighbouring village, and to a pedestrian excursion, of nine or ten miles from Macclesfield, when, starting at two in the morning, he "roamed for the first time over the land of heather and discovered what a *moor* was." These accounts were constantly associated with expressions of gratitude towards those who had relieved him from the pressure of business by their assistance,

or otherwise contributed to his comfort or amusement.

Though he never forgot his early home, and frequently referred to particular spots hallowed by the remembrances of friendship and affection, it cost him no great effort to be contented. Adverting to the aspect of the country near Macclesfield, he says, "I must own I prefer the pretty little quiet villages of Norfolk and Suffolk. However, I can most truly say I never was more happy in my life. All at present goes on smoothly and pleasantly, and time passes away as if I were always to be happy and care were never to be known."

He had seldom wooed the muses, though by no means insensible to their charms. But at this cheerful period he wrote a Hudibrastic epistle to a little girl, to whom he had promised to send a description of Macclesfield. That composition, evidently almost impromptu, contains a graphic enumeration of his official and domestic arrangements, to which his removal from all earthly scenes has imparted a mournful interest. There is a playfulness in its style which illustrates his happy disposition, while the kindness of heart by which the effort was dictated will sufficiently justify a reference in these pages to a performance so unpretending. Things trivial in themselves acquire a new power

and are invested with another aspect when associated with the memory of the dead, as every leaf, when contrasted with the evening sky, receives a peculiar distinctness as well as a more sombre hue.

Having sketched with spirit the appearance of the town and the situation of the Dispensary, he introduces his young correspondent to his own "sanctum," and thus exhibits some of its internal features :—

"And many well known friends you'll spy  
Hanging in silent effigy ;  
Then, as to furniture, six chairs,  
Duly divided into pairs,  
And one with elbows to recline in  
After that tedious process, dining,  
Surround the room ; in medio  
My table stands, I bid you know,  
On which I breakfast, dine, take tea,  
Read, write, *dissect* occasionally ;  
Then at one end's another table,  
Which shortly hence, if I am able,  
I'll change for a piano-forte,  
By Broadwood or Clementi wrought,  
To cheer a lonely evening hour,  
With strains from Bayly, Hemans, Moore.  
Between the windows stands another,  
So like you'd say 'twas a twin brother ;  
This holds my desk, or its apology,  
Some books, and chest of Toxicology."

After pointing to some of his professional trophies, where



“Legs, ribs, and arms, in due array,  
Tell the sad tale of man’s decay,  
And teach this moral as they rest,  
‘Mors omnibus communis est’ ”—

he dexterously changes the stanza, and alludes, in concluding, to the bouquets with which, through the kindness of friends, who soon discovered his taste for flowers, he was abundantly supplied:—

“Around me are blowing,  
In sweetest youth glowing,  
The choicest of Flora’s gay train ;  
Of roses the rarest  
And myrtles the fairest  
Are entwined with the lovely jasmine.

“But as they, too, must fade,  
And in dust soon be laid,  
Like all fair things this vain world produces,  
So, my dear little friend,  
My letter must end—  
And I’m paid if one hour it amuses.

“Yet allow me to say,  
Ere my strain dies away,  
Whether distant or near we may be,  
Though time may long sever,  
Yet I shall be, ever,  
Your affectionate friend—N. E. P.”

To another correspondent he writes:—“I have indeed, on looking around me, no reason whatever to wish my lot had been otherwise

cast. As you remember, I was a little disappointed that I had to resign my previous engagement; but really now, when I contrast my present active situation and extensive practice with the confined limits and luxurious idleness I should have there met with, I cannot but be very glad that the arrangements have been as they are. I have so constantly found that things have always been wisely ordained, and am so convinced that we are but inferior judges of what is good for us, as never for a moment to doubt that temporary disappointment is merely a passing cloud sent to obscure our path, for some greater object than our shortsightedness is able to fathom." At a period when he little anticipated the manner in which this sentiment was to be exemplified in his own case, it is pleasant to find him adding, though cautiously, in allusion to yet more important subjects: "I endeavour, all in my power, to profit by your good advice; but you know I hate to make professions, which *may* not stand the test of time and trial."

He did not disregard the circumstance that some of his new acquaintance were friends for both worlds. His supporters, he remarked, had been the excellent of all denominations; and being entirely unfettered as to the ministry to which he should attach himself, he early formed

the design of becoming a hearer at St. George's church, where he believed he "should derive the most benefit," and where one of his most intimate associates was accustomed to attend. He afterwards spoke of the pulpit addresses to which he there listened as remarkably impressive and awakening.

The total number of the Dispensary patients had been reduced, in consequence of the unfavourable state of its finances, from three or four hundred to about one hundred and thirty ; so that, as Mr. Parker had the assistance of a dispenser and apprentice, he regarded his office as by no means burdensome. Habitually cheerful, sanguine, and energetic, he declared that if he were sure of being a dweller in mortal mould no more than three years, he did not know any situation in which comfort and happiness for life could be obtained on easier terms. Yet it is difficult to conceive that at this period an internal voice did not sometimes whisper the probability that his sun might be prematurely clouded and go down "while it was yet noon." Scarcely had he resided a month at Macclesfield, before he felt his health to be precarious. The keener air of the north affected him more severely than that of London, and he acknowledged that he was a very different being from what he had been previously to typhus fever.

When he had filled the office of house-surgeon about three months, a circumstance occurred which rendered his duties increasingly laborious. A gentleman, by whom he had been materially assisted, then completed the term of his apprenticeship, and the committee were unable to supply the vacancy. Not only did the care of the books of the establishment devolve upon Mr. Parker in addition to his other daily and casual labours, but it became exclusively his business to attend the home patients, never during his stay less than eighty in number, and many of whom resided in opposite directions a mile from the institution. His professional visits to the sick poor afforded the most congenial sphere for the exercise of his natural benevolence. And he did not shrink from this trial of his strength even when, if it had not induced actual disease, it had, as he afterwards himself admitted, at least brought him "into that state of weakness upon which disease is most prone to engraft itself."

"In writing to me relative to the Dispensary patients," observes the gentleman who kindly at a moment's notice took Mr. Parker's duties, "he almost invariably mentioned them as his 'poor invalid flock;' and the accuracy with which he referred to various cases, clearly demonstrated the intense interest which each one

afforded him. The wants also of a large number of the poor, who had been his patients, were known to him in all their bearings, and he appeared to delight in directing me where to bestow the generous charity which some of the good people of Macclesfield are in the habit of leaving to the discretion of the house-surgeon of their Dispensary. His exertions in attendance upon the Dispensary patients must have been enormous; indeed, far greater than could have been endured by a much more vigorous frame than his. I am not inactive, but a knowledge of what he frequently accomplished in a day puts me to shame. All the poor whom we had mutually attended in sickness, universally spoke of Parker as ‘that dear attentive gentleman,’ and often have I been told of his entering the dwelling of a patient in so exhausted a condition that every exertion was necessary to prevent fainting, which in one instance did actually occur, to the great dismay of those present. He neglected himself to an extreme degree, so much so that the poor even frequently urged him to go home to dinner before he finished his rounds, but to no purpose. All the powers of his beneficent and highly gifted mind were centred in the promotion of the happiness and well-being of others, and *self* was cast into oblivion as not worthy of a moment’s thought.

“ I had some slight knowledge of Parker at St. George’s Hospital, and often tried to become better acquainted with him, but without success, for, though always affable, yet he appeared to wish to remain as much as possible a stranger, in order probably to devote himself with more ardour to his profession, which he certainly pursued with great attention and perseverance. Upon my arrival at Macclesfield, without previous knowledge of the fact, I recognised with sorrow, in the emaciated person of poor Parker, my old friend and fellow student of St. George’s Hospital.”

At the period to which the last paragraph relates, Mr. Parker had been suffering from an attack of inflammation in the chest, which rendered him incapable of continuing his labours. The alacrity which he manifested on every call of professional duty, for a time concealed from the other medical officers of the institution the extent of his debility. On being informed of his state, the committee immediately proposed to engage a deputy for two months, proposing to do this free of any expense to himself. Grati-  
fied as he was by this offer, his nice sense of rectitude made him demur to the latter part of it, which appeared to him to be improper under the existing circumstances of the institution, as well as to involve the sacrifice of his indepen-

dence. Actuated by the same characteristic feelings, when he afterwards tendered his resignation, he questioned whether it would not be "proper and just towards the Dispensary," that he should offer to defray a part of the expenses attending the election, which would result from his abandonment of the situation. He preferred turning the handsome proposal of the committee to the advantage of his substitute, which he did by a successful application to them to allow that gentleman an assistant.

Meanwhile the surgeons had divided among themselves the temporary care of the home patients, and Mr. Parker was attended with unremitting kindness by his "inestimable friend Mr. L——," who neglected nothing which could be done to contribute to his recovery, comfort, or amusement. Referring to that gentleman, in a letter to a medical friend of subsequent date, he says: "Three times a day did he visit me, day after day, week after week, put on the blisters, and often dressed them himself. ....I am indeed become much attached to Macclesfield, and so I have every reason to be, for I have experienced the utmost hospitality and kindness during my short career, both before and since my illness....I hope," he adds, with characteristic cheerfulness, "your practice will go on increasing: everything must



have a beginning, and it is very consolatory to know that a great oak invariably has sprung from a *little acorn*."

The severity of the symptoms was somewhat allayed; but the accompanying debility being extreme, he consented to leave Macclesfield in search of a softer air, and in order to avoid causing additional trouble to friends there, to whom he already considered himself so deeply indebted. The attachment and gratitude he felt towards them was only equalled by the cordial esteem he had earned, during his short career, from all with whom he had been associated.

We find him addressing Mr. L——, from London, on the 27th of December, 1839, as follows:—

"My dear sir,

"I should have written much sooner had I not remembered that you knew I travelled under escort. On the 25th I was rather lazy, lay on the sofa, saw friends, and heard music. Yesterday, who should appear but my good friend Mr. R——, from St. Neots, who took me to Dr. Burne, and staid with me the remainder of the day. . . . The journey to Crewe was terribly slow, but did not tire me much. We got into a London carriage at once at the latter place, according to your advice, and made no

further change till we reached town, which, owing to the wind, accidents, &c., was three hours later than usual. Mr. R. had kindly intended taking me down with him for the advantage of a medical host, but Dr. B. strongly urged native air and *no doctor*.

With kindest regards to Mrs. L—— and my little friends, and the warmest thanks that gratitude can dictate for all your undeserved kindness and attention, I am, dear sir,

Most gratefully and sincerely yours,

N. E. PARKER."

In truth his medical friends foresaw but too clearly the almost inevitable result. His parents learned, only in time to make the requisite preparation, that he was on his way towards home. A sad evening it was when, after a weary journey by coach, he arrived at Redenhall, and heavily fell the foreboding upon the hearts of his attached relatives, that the lamp which had hitherto burned with increasing lustre was soon to be extinguished, and that little remained but to shelter the faltering flame, and to minister to its revival in a purified and deathless form.

At first his own hope of recovery was sanguine, and for many weeks he continued to be, in some measure, the subject of that strange infatuation which almost invariably marks the consumptive

patient. Yet his hope was evidently mingled with apprehension, and ultimately disappeared under the consciousness of increasing disease. On his having one day spoken of returning to Macclesfield "in the course of six weeks," his father expressed great fear that he would be very far from a fit state for doing so; when he replied, "Father, if I am not well enough to return in six weeks, before six months I shall be under the turf." About the end of January, 1840, he wrote: "My constant quick pulse and cough, as well as a little feeling of tightness across the chest, sometimes warn me not to be too sanguine. However," he added, "these things never give me a moment's uneasiness; whatever providence may see fit to do with me, I shall not repine, or ever for a moment repent of having gone to Macclesfield, where I think I can say I have spent six of the happiest months of my life." He adds, "I often congratulate myself on having quitted Macclesfield when I did. Though there I enjoyed every comfort and attention that could be wished for, or that I could think of, yet there is in parental love and affection a constant source of delight which throws an almost indescribable charm around, and which I can never be sufficiently thankful in stating that I enjoy in the highest degree."

Again, somewhat later, addressing one of his

medical friends, he says—"Now, if you asked me what I thought of myself, I could not tell you, and do not believe any one can tell yet whether my tubercles will come on or not. Sometimes I feel as if all were going on almost as well as ever. The cough, for a time, seems easy; I breathe more freely, and feel cheerful, and should not know my weakness if I were not to try my strength; then, alas, I find the machine seems without a mainspring. I did not think, when I left Macclesfield, that I had any organic disease, and imagined the change of air would almost directly recruit me; but the third week altered my opinion. I was sure mere simple debility would not hang so long in hand in the country. However, the thought gives me no uneasiness. I am quite resigned to the will of God, and care not about the result, either way; though I must confess I am sometimes a little worried at the thought that, perhaps, I may be left a mere wreck, unable to follow my profession, and a constant trouble to my friends, which to me would be far worse than at once taking my place amongst 'the rude forefathers of the hamlet.'"

The entire absence of anxiety as to his eternal destiny manifested in these extracts, is very remarkable; since they show that it did not arise from ignorance of the real nature of

his disease, nor was merely assumed for the purpose of sparing his nearer friends unnecessary pain. There is reason to believe the feeling had become familiar to his breast, that all worldly good is cloying and unsatisfying to the soul. Such a remark called forth from him the emphatic assent, "That is *very* true; I have *found* it so." This conviction and the fortitude of his mental constitution might in part account for the almost unnatural calmness with which, when he did refer to it, he spoke of his approaching dissolution. But, besides this, there was often a gaiety in his manner and conversation quite unsuited to his circumstances, and exceedingly painful to those who longed to see him taking a solemn and profitable view of that "valley of the shadow of death" which he had even then entered. And although occasional levity might be attributed to the influence of opium and fever, it cannot but be admitted that he manifested, during the earlier part of his illness, a lamentable want of due consideration as to the grounds on which the sinner may safely expect to meet, undismayed, the king of terrors. Unless the veil of unbelief be drawn over the awful future exhibited by the light of revelation, it seems impossible to regard him, at this period, but as a melancholy spectacle of the folly and vanity of

the unrenewed man in his best estate, and a fearful example of *the peril of security*.

Our departed friend, during his residence in London, had sometimes contended strenuously for the soundness of Pope's celebrated couplet—

“For modes of *faith* let graceless zealots fight ;  
His can't be wrong whose *life* is in the right”—

a sentiment alike welcome, in its garb of spurious charity, to the naturally benevolent disposition, and flattering to the pride of the human heart. The pernicious fallacy was met, in the present case, by an appeal to the New Testament. It was suggested that the holiness of life there inculcated is very different, in its origin and character, from mere outward morality, since it has to do with the thoughts and affections and hidden motives of the heart, and its existence is inseparably connected with faith in Jesus Christ and the regenerating influences of the Holy Spirit. So that, while the statement of the philosophic poet would be correct on a scriptural interpretation of his own expressions, it is impossible the “life,” however fair its exterior, should, in its principles and springs of action, be “right,” while the “mode of faith” remains essentially defective, unscriptural, and “wrong.” Probably the opinion, in its loose and popular acceptance, had not been cordially abandoned.

The heart often continues to maintain its rebellion long after the understanding has yielded to reason and revelation : and this vain trust in externals was especially likely to associate itself with that high tone of moral conduct which leaves the individual, whatever cause there may be for anxiety, at least unincumbered by the dreadful weight of remorse on account of gross sin.

The frivolity which has been mentioned did not spring, like that of Hume, from a fixed disbelief of the christian revelation. Our friend appears, indeed, to have experienced, at one time, painful doubts, and to have become acquainted with the more learned and specious objections to christianity; but there is no reason to think he long remained under the blighting and withering influence of infidel opinions; assuredly he was not willing to stake his soul's safety upon their truth. Though generally reserved as to the state of his mind on religious subjects, he had occasionally made them the subject of friendly conversation, and he invariably expressed the deepest gratitude towards those who had evinced an interest in his spiritual welfare.

One of those friends, with the utmost plainness, invited his attention to the importance of an immediate preparation for death. To the



inquiry, "I suppose you believe the Bible to be the word of God?" his answer was very prompt, earnest, and decided : " Unquestionably—no doubt of it." Being then reminded how painful to his friends must be the frivolity of his manner, and how much pleasure it would afford them to see him calmly waiting the will of God, whatever it might be, he said, "I hope I am doing so."

"And are you," rejoined his friend, "*prepared* for all the will of God?"

"No; I do not know that I am."

"Then how sad to remain unconcerned in such a state, under any circumstances, but especially in yours!"

Being thus driven from the common refuge of self-righteousness, he escaped into the opposite antinomian error, and replied, lightly, "Well, you know I cannot change my own heart—I must wait till it please God to give me his grace."

"And do you think such an excuse will avail you at the day of judgment?"

"No; I do not know that it will."

"And have you sincerely prayed for that grace which you need?"

"Perhaps not; but I have known some people who had been praying and praying all their lives, and yet they were never converted."

“And whence,” said his faithful monitor, shocked at his indulging in such a strain, “do you derive these notions?—from the Bible?—is that read as it ought to be?”

These direct questions evidently touched his conscience, and he answered gravely, “No ; I do not read the Bible so much as I ought.”

His friend then endeavoured to convince him that it was Satan’s stratagem to persuade him to sit still and imagine that it would be of no use to pray. He was reminded of the express and reiterated language of the Saviour, “Ask, and it shall be given you ; seek, and ye shall find ; knock, and it shall be opened unto you ;” Mat. vii. 7. “If ye, then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?” Luke xi. 13. “Verily, verily, I say unto you, whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name he will give it you.” John xvi. 23. The necessity of regeneration on the one hand, and the duty of an earnest application to the throne of mercy on the other, were pressed home with uncompromising sincerity. The conversation was closed by an entreaty that he would read his Bible with fervent prayer, and a confident assurance that, if he diligently used the means, most certainly God would give the blessing.

This faithful appeal was the means of awakening him to a more lively sense of his spiritual need. A few days after, on the same individual inquiring whether he had read a book which had been lent him, he replied, "No, I have read no book to-day but *the book*; you say that is the best book for me to read." From this time it became his constant practice, when able, to spend a considerable part of every day in reading or hearing the holy scriptures; and his love of them daily increased, until, at length, all other books dwindled, in his estimation, into comparative worthlessness.

The admonitions given in the conversation above mentioned, having been renewed in a letter from the same friend, he wrote in reply as follows:—

Redenhall, Feb. 28, 1840.

"Dear ——,

"I felt much vexed and disappointed when your kind letter was put into my hands, that I had not sooner executed my daily intention of briefly thanking you for the great kindness and attention I had experienced at your hands during your recent sojourn amongst us, and which will ever, ever be remembered by me and mine with the deepest gratitude. I had delayed it from day to day, thinking perhaps I should feel better on the morrow; but at last

the east winds came, and I have since been able to do nothing. They revived my old malady in the throat, and have left me, once more, a wreck.

“I have carefully read your letter many times, and shall and do obey its precepts to the best of my power. I shall not write on the subject, but prefer following what I am sure was good advice—to take the Bible and make *that* my rule and guide.

“This is the first day I have attempted to write for a fortnight, and I am thankful to say I can breathe more easily.

“With much sincere gratitude and kind love, believe me,

“Ever most sincerely yours,

“N. E. P.”

A few days afterwards, a medical friend who visited him, candidly represented, both to himself and his parents, that his case had assumed a form which left little more that art could do for him. He still indulged, however, the vain hope that the disease might, “after a time, remain dormant awhile.” This delusive leaning was increasingly distressing to his friends, united as it was with the same vague expressions of acquiescence in the will of God, and with much reserve as to the basis of his hope. He was

again invited to a more sober estimate of his position by a letter from a near relative.

“My dear N——,

“You will perhaps feel a little surprised at receiving a letter in my handwriting when I have daily the opportunity of seeing you and conversing personally with you. But there is a question I have long since desired to ask you, and which, when viewed in connexion with your present circumstances, has excited an anxiety, though in a great measure concealed, deep, and increasing; and seldom having an opportunity of seeing you alone, I have come to the determination of using my pen for the purpose.

“Whatever may be your own opinion respecting your case, it is *certain* your days on earth, my dear fellow, are ‘numbered.’ Consumption is indeed carrying you, and by no tardy steps, to that country ‘whence there is no return.’ Oh! there is an anxious question arising continually in my mind when I think of this, and it is seldom absent from my thoughts—what are your hopes for eternity? and on what are they grounded? Have you sought or are you seeking the promised grace of God? Has the ‘sting of death’ been removed by the pardon of sin, and a sense of God’s gracious

acceptance of you through the merits and atonement of Christ? A satisfactory assurance that such is indeed the case would relieve my mind, and the minds of many others, from inexpressible anxiety *now*, and be a subject of comfortable reflection in future time, when, if spared, we must think of you as entered upon an eternal scene. I know these things have more employed your thoughts of late ; but how is it with you? can you view the last enemy as a vanquished foe?

“Ponder these subjects seriously, and if you are not in possession of the peace of mind which flows from a sense of God’s pardoning love and favour, be persuaded to continue to seek it in continual, earnest, and fervent prayer, and be assured he will grant it, if you persevere in that duty. Merely temporal blessings we may perhaps pray for in doubt whether they will be granted us ; but it is not so with spiritual. We can pray for *them* with a certainty, an absolute certainty, of obtaining them if we persevere in prayer, because it is the express and positive declaration and promise of him who cannot lie, and who is, in his purposes and nature, immutable.

“Oh, my dear N., may you and I and all of us give these things our most serious and prayerful consideration, that we may secure an

interest in the dying love of Christ, which alone can sustain and cheer us in the prospect of death, when all hopes and enjoyments connected with this world will be perishing around us. Then, when the toils, anxieties, and trials of this life are come to a close with us, we who have thus far lived together in the enjoyment of those comforts and delights which arise from family peace and concord, and the interchange of feelings of affection and kindness, shall rejoin each other in the mansions of the blessed, where those feelings will be purified and strengthened, and partings shall be known no more for ever."

. . . . .

The dream of hope having ceased to linger in his imagination, he announced his conviction to his distant friends. Addressing one of them, he adverts to the foregoing letter in a manner which should encourage others to offer the counsels of unreserved faithfulness, although appearances may excite a fear lest they should be unwelcome.

"A few days since, I was kindly visited and carefully examined by a gentleman I had formerly known and whom I particularly esteemed. I requested him to be very candid and not fear to tell the truth, either to me or my friends, as we were prepared, in one sense, for anything. He was very open and plain with me, but per-



haps more so with my friends, who I have no doubt heard the *whole* truth, and one so trying for the time that they almost shrank from verbally acquainting me with it. It seems an excellent brother, residing a few miles off, was deputed to tell the worst. His letter I enclose, as I think it one of the most suitable that could possibly be sent as a kind warning to a dying mortal. Had I known you merely as a friend for *time* I should not have had the boldness to have troubled you with such a letter; but as I know you also to be a friend for *eternity*, I have not the least doubt but it will be received and estimated as it deserves. Such letters are to me already worth gold mines; and I know you will not despise them. Perhaps my excellent friend Mr. T—— would like to see it.”

To a medical acquaintance of nearly his own standing, he observes in reference to the fidelity which had been exercised towards him: “How much better for a poor dying mortal than vain hope and flattery! I feel it *all true*, and do not repine at my lot. It is doubtless ordered by an all-wise God, to snatch me from some fatal snares which might have surrounded a longer life; and my constant prayer to God is to enable me fervently and cheerfully to say, ‘Thy will be done,’ and to cheer and protect me through the ‘dark valley.’ I shall always be very glad to receive

a letter from you ; but you will not be surprised if I do not answer. This, probably, may be my last communication with you on earth ; but of how little consequence if we meet for ever in the heavenly kingdom !”

Writing to a correspondent at Macclesfield, he alludes to the clergyman on whose ministry he had there attended :—“ I well remember the last sermon I heard Mr. Burnet preach. Do not you recollect, while walking home, I observed, ‘ What a forcible and energetic appeal to our hearts !’ and added that Mr. Burnet always preached as if every Sabbath were to be our last ? How little did either you or I think *that* would be the last on which I should join in public worship on earth ! But such probably will be the case : a solemn thought indeed. I look back on all his sermons with the greatest pleasure.”

The excellent minister whom he mentions with so much interest, but whose living voice he was no more to hear, kindly sent him a copy of “ The Sinner’s Friend,” with the following note :

“ My dear sir,

“ I am sure you will excuse my addressing you. Mr. L—— has informed me of your very precarious state ; and as I feel convinced humanity would lead you to suggest any alleviation of bodily painful feeling, I would,

through the same principle, desire to speak a word of comfort to your spirit.

“ My dear sir, there is a *great physician*, who never refuses to heal the spiritual disease of humble and contrite sinners. Hesitate not ; but throw yourself on the mercy of God through this Saviour. Remember his calls, his promises, his love ; and pray for faith to venture wholly on him. He never has rejected, and never will reject, any soul that so seeks him.

“ I must not, however, weary you. I send a dear little book, the blessing of which to many dying mortals I can attest.

“ Were I to sum up the whole gospel scheme in one portion of scripture, I would select Eph. ii. Heb. chapter xii. abounds with comfort ; and John xvii. will lead you to the great intercessor. The commencement of chapter xvi. is also most consolatory.

“ May the God of all peace be with you, granting you every good gift—strengthening your faith, assuaging your sufferings, guarding your bed, clearing your intellect, renewing your heart, pardoning your sins, opening your lips in prayer, and keeping your soul in peace—for Christ’s sake. Such, dear sir, is the sincere prayer of

“ Your faithful servant in the Lord,

JOHN BURNET.

“ March 25th, 1840.”

Early in the following month Mr. Parker wrote to another of his pious friends in Macclesfield—"I had a most sweet note and tract from our much esteemed pastor, Mr. Burnet, a few days since. . . . I am indeed most favoured by a kind God. I have consolation from every page of his word; and I trust I shall be able to view the last enemy, when he comes, without fear."

He derived much pleasure and comfort from the thought that the situation he had been obliged to leave had been suitably filled, and that all things in the scene of usefulness to which he had become so truly attached, were going on well. After referring to this subject in a letter dated a few days prior to that from which the last extract is taken, he thus manifests the new current into which his thoughts and desires had been turned:—

"But if I feel grateful for the past relating to earthly matters, how much more so should I be for that which relates to eternity, and speaks of a faith bright, strong, and constant, which can dispel the gloom of the 'dark valley,' and land its pilgrim safely at last on the shore of the heavenly Canaan. This subject has been particularly interesting to me for several weeks, but perhaps more so the last month, since which time I have perceived that, although strength was gained again, slowly, after a severe attack

which I then had in my throat, yet the work of destruction in the lungs was making its way. The knowledge of such a situation necessarily brings death before our thoughts in a different way to that in which we view him *at a distance*—to which we are much too prone in health. Since this time, religious subjects have more occupied my time and thoughts, and I now read nothing else. I much fear trying to persuade myself, on wrong premises, that I have obtained forgiveness through the Lord Jesus, and that I am accepted of God as one whose sins shall be pardoned through his blood. Many are the harassing and perplexing doubts and fears that come in my course, and, though I can sometimes conquer them for a time, I cannot at present truly say that

“I can read my title clear  
To mansions in the skies.”

Still, so many are the bright assurances with which I meet, that perhaps I may, before long, have a clearer view. I have every comfort and enjoyment that earth can afford: what a blessing!

“It is thought I shall not last long. This, of course, is uncertain. The disease has made much progress; but my constitution seems to fight against it still, with vigour, and I some-

times think I shall last through the summer, judging from my present powers. God only knows; and I am quite resigned to his will.

“Would it not be a proper piece of respect for me to write a few lines to the committee, acquainting them with my state, as, notwithstanding any temporary reprieve which it may please God to grant me, I feel I shall never again be able to engage in active duties? How little I thought, when I left you, that it was for ever on earth!”

Writing to other friends in allusion to the opinion some had expressed, that he was fast sinking, he observes: “Only an all-wise and merciful God knows whether I am going so rapidly. I rather feel that I shall sink down by degrees, and that the work may be tedious. . . . I now long to settle all my worldly matters that I may have less interruption to much more important things.” . . . “Although I am aware it may please God to prolong my life many months, still I cannot, also, but be aware, every night when retiring to bed, that sudden hæmorrhage may perhaps, before morning, bring me to the verge of eternity; and the reflection often gives me some anxiety, and induces me to wish, as early as possible, to ‘set my house in order.’”

The Committee of the Dispensary had, with

kind deference to his feelings, extended his leave of absence to the middle of June, but he tendered his resignation several weeks before that period; and, having thus solemnly taken leave of all earthly pursuits, he devoted himself heartily and constantly to the great work of preparation for his final change.

A relative, who visited him in May, and who—too well acquainted with scenes of affliction and death—was enabled to contribute, in no small degree, towards smoothing his passage to the grave, thus describes his sick room:—

“I found him sitting up, cheerful and animated, but with no levity of manner or expression; yet he evidently shunned to admit the fact that his case was quite hopeless. He spoke hypothetically, but not despondingly, of renovated health, and return to his profession. He was full of gratitude at what he called the unbounded kindness of friends, and was quite willing to look higher and acknowledge that it was God, his best friend, who prompted them, and thus comforted him. His bible, some tracts, one or two little volumes of sacred poetry, and his desk were on the table. He spoke in general terms of the value of the bible, and of the selection of *little* works on religious subjects which friends had supplied now his mind was too feeble and hurried to admit of any con-



tinuous stretch of thought. When I remarked that the tendency of all of them was to lead the reader out of himself and to Christ, as the only refuge of the sinner, and that I hoped he felt in this consisted their especial value, he cordially assented, though without any marked personal application. On my taking leave of him, he expressed some anxiety to know when I should visit him again; and on my naming the summer months he shook his head, looked mournfully, and said, "Not before *that* time?" I was convinced he thought it very uncertain whether he should live to see me. I then remarked that I hoped he would be seeking an interest in the Saviour—the best friend in life, the only support in death. He answered that it was his desire to do so, but that he was afraid of deceiving himself or others."

While he was not given over to despair, he was restrained from presumption by a powerful conviction of sin, and of its aggravated character as having been committed, in his case, against the light of early instruction and the warnings of providence. The unsatisfactory nature of the repentance which derives all its evidences from the sick chamber, occasioned him deep and often very distressing anxiety. At one period, as it was thought, of imminent danger, he was reminded of the promise, "Him that cometh

unto me I will *in no wise* cast out." The mingled feelings indicated by his reply were truly affecting. "I know," he said, "I *ought* not to doubt the mercy of God; but what dependance can you place upon a death-bed repentance?"

His allusions to his approaching death were sometimes unreserved, solemn, and instructive. One day some wild flowers—primroses, cowslips, forget-me-not, etc.—were taken into his room. He looked at them with evident pleasure, and turning them round once or twice, said, "Beautiful, very beautiful those spring flowers are: and the *autumn* ones I never expect to see." His views of gospel truth, also, became more clear, and his personal application of them more and more decided, serene, and consolatory, until there was, so far as any death-bed can supply it, a reasonable and scriptural ground of confidence, that he was waiting for death in the faith of Christ, renouncing all other hope, and simply and sincerely resting himself upon the mercy of God, as revealed in the gospel, through the atonement of the Redeemer. But the indications of this change of heart and views were slow and far from being obtrusive. They were invariably expressed with extreme caution in words; and often a look conveyed more than the words.

The prospect of early death had in itself failed to smite him with terror, or even to arouse him from the slumber of indifference. But an unseen hand had gradually removed the incubus. He had awoke to the full conviction that the chief happiness of the present life is the hope of a future and better state. All his thoughts and desires yielded to the silent and abiding impulse. His anxiety was not confined to seasons of immediate alarm or unusual depression. It was deep and permanent as well as influential—not the galvanic effort of a corpse, but the pervading energy of the life-giving Spirit. So far as human agency is concerned in a transformation so entirely beyond the unaided power of man, it must, in the present instance, be attributed to the efforts of intelligent and earnest christian friends, and, perhaps chiefly, to the many prayers which had been offered on his behalf from his earliest years. Does it not appear that without those efforts and prayers he had been lost? Oh, blessed and honoured indeed are they who, having themselves found acceptance at the throne of mercy, seek to bring down mercy upon the confident and prayerless!

So from the deep Atlantic seas,  
Unseen, unfelt, a cloud ascends,

Till wafted by the western breeze,  
Its shadow o'er our isle it bends,  
Pours softly down the plenteous shower,  
O'ershadows sky and earth, yet brightens every flower.

But lest all fountains should be dry,  
And even friendship's cisterns fail,  
An Intercessor lives on high,  
Who, once for all, hath passed the veil ;  
He pities our distresses still,  
His heart nor time can change, nor all our frailty chill.

Throughout the circle of Mr. Parker's relatives and friends, the assurance that he had become the subject of impressions so desirable, was welcomed with much interest and thankfulness. There were not a few who could sympathize with the affection and joy expressed in the following extract from a letter addressed to one of his brothers :—

“ Many, many thanks to you for your full detail of our dear Nathaniel's state. I was prepared for the sad conviction that his earthly pilgrimage was nearly ended, and rejoiced, therefore, was I to hear that, with that certainty, his eyes had opened to the true state of his malady, and turned more earnestly to those rich sources of better consolation, which in health, as I know too well by experience, are often thrown into the back-ground, at least comparatively, by the cold realities of life. . . . Our family must ever look to him with the

affection of a brother, not only for the share we enjoyed of his own affection, with the rest of those who knew, to love, him; but from the cherished recollection that he was the active friend and tender consoler in the hour of our deepest sorrow. And often, as I think of him, and of his bright prospects, and his all but spotless life, do I join with you, my dear H. in your sorrow and disappointment; only I trust, in some faint degree, also to sympathize with your joy, as you witness, under the cloud of affliction, his character still more fully ripen into that of the true and humble follower of Christ."

He received, during his long affliction, frequent visits from the beloved minister and friend by whom, in his infancy, he had been dedicated to God, who had often looked upon him with anxiety, and had never ceased to evince an interest in the general improvement of his mind, and in his greatest good.

"At length"—said this individual, when subsequently improving the death of Mr. Parker—"at length God, in his own infinitely wise and gracious way, heard the prayers and accomplished the desires of his best friends. From earthly prospects of the fairest description he was removed to the scene of long continued affliction, not there to express a single sentiment

of dissatisfaction ; but to speak of the immense mercy of God, who had delivered him from spiritual dangers, which might have given occasion to an eternal wreck.

“ In all the visits which I paid him, he never mentioned what, by his affliction, he had lost of an earthly kind, but spoke of the goodness of God towards him. He viewed affliction not in its painful character, but as God’s means for effecting the greatest possible good to his immortal soul. The earthly tenement was gradually taken down, that the precious inhabitant, purified by grace, might be ripened for the mansions of glory.

“ There was a marked progress in his spiritual experience. His humility daily became more and more deep : no disposition to exalt himself could be discerned by the keenest observer. There was no inclination to rest upon fancied merit in any form. For many weeks—and never so much as towards the close of his life—his language seemed to be, ‘ I determine to know nothing save Jesus Christ and him crucified : God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ ! ’ I feel great pleasure, now, in the remembrance how often I have seen his bible lying on his bed, and, when unable to read himself, how his feeble frame seemed to be reanimated while

some friend opened it, and presented to his hearing passages which described the power and grace of Christ, and which told of the precious blood of Jesus. The doctrine of the atonement excited the full confidence of his soul. He seemed ever to be breathing the spirit so beautifully expressed in those affecting lines :—

‘ My faith would lay her hand  
On that dear head of thine,  
While, like a penitent, I stand,  
And there confess my sin.’

“ His bible was his treasure—more precious to him than gold, and ‘ sweeter than honey or the honey-comb.’ To several of his friends he spoke most fully upon this point. This blessed volume, the hymns and psalms of Dr. Watts—those living and dying consolations of tens of thousands—and the Olney hymns, with similar compositions, formed all his study ;—thus indicating the love of God and of Christ shed abroad in the heart, and delightfully showing that, while the outward man was perishing, the inward man was renewed day by day.

“ I have spoken only those things of which I was an eye and ear witness. Those who tenderly watched over him by night and day well know that the circumstances to which I have imperfectly alluded were not occasional, but



habitual. They saw his patience—his gratitude brought into action even by the slightest mark of attention. They saw his faith. They saw how intently he dwelt on the word of life, and how fervently he poured out his soul in the hallowed seasons of prayer. They saw the calmness of his mind. There was no ecstasy, but a humble looking for and hope of the mercy of God unto eternal life, through Jesus Christ.”

The foregoing statements are confirmed by those of the relative to whose renewed visit he had looked forward with so much anxiety.

“When I saw him again,” she remarks, “his physical powers were much reduced; the grasshopper was become a burden. He was still attentive to personal neatness, but the effort was laborious and exhausting; and as soon as dressed he was fain to throw himself, weary and dispirited, on the bed. But his *mind* was, I felt at once, in a more vigorous, collected, and hopeful state. He no longer spoke of recovery. He listened with interest to subjects nearly or remotely connected with religion. He was reading his Bible, not as a task, irksome, though needful, for one who *must* give up the world and its pursuits, but diligently, with interest and delight. He spoke of his professional pros-

pects, and of all the various ways in which he had received such unlooked-for encouragement. But not the faintest expression of repining mingled with his remarks. He said he had *quite* given up his worldly views, that he had no longer a wish to resume them, and that he felt very thankful that God had so entirely withdrawn him from them, and given him the great advantage of so protracted an illness, without the loss of his mental powers. He told me his reading in the Bible was almost entirely confined to the Psalms, some portions of the prophecies, and the New Testament, especially the epistles of Paul. He expressed surprise that so many good and learned men should have given their labours so much to controversial subjects—it seemed to him that these were of such minor importance, and that the grand leading doctrines of evangelical truth were so simple no one could misunderstand them. He added, in a desponding tone, ‘The difficulty is to apply them, and to feel such an interest in them as my best friends desire me to do.’ He said he had many waking hours in the night, but his thoughts were often so roving and confused at that time, he could not bring them to connected prayer, though he often tried to do so. One morning, in answer to my usual inquiry, he said, ‘Not much sleep; but I have

had a more *comfortable* night than usual ; I have been able to collect my thoughts a little, and I hope I *have* prayed.' ”

At this time, and till within a very short period of his death, it was his almost daily request that the family would assemble in his room for evening worship. It was very interesting and affecting to hear him thus inviting the *whole* family circle to come around him, and then inquiring, “ Will you sing a hymn, father, before family worship ? ” If, from weakness, he dozed during any part of the service, he expressed regret and self-reproach. But he was usually pleased and animated ; generally selected both hymn and tune for himself, and more than once joined in, when a verse suited or interested him. The character of the selection he made was very marked, always having reference to the value of the Bible, the sinner’s necessities, the Saviour’s all-sufficiency, or the prospect and happiness of the heavenly world. When, from increased feebleness, he preferred to have a hymn read to him, he still delighted in the same subjects. And though he had a refined taste and could appreciate beautiful poetry, it was observable that he uniformly considered the language as of secondary importance, giving his almost exclusive regard to the ideas embodied.

Watts's version of the seventeenth psalm having been chosen for one of these domestic services, the placid though enfeebled invalid, who always formed so interesting a part of the group, inquired whether his uncle Wilton Parker had not sung a part of that psalm on the night before his death—a circumstance well remembered among the older branches of the family—and himself joined, with marked emphasis and self-appropriation, in singing the same verses :—

“ This life's a dream, an empty show ;  
But the bright world to which I go  
Hath joys substantial and sincere ;  
When shall I wake and find me there ?

“ O glorious hour ! O blest abode !  
I shall be near and like my God,  
And flesh and sin no more control  
The sacred pleasures of the soul.”

The excellent young man with whose memory these lines had become associated, was carried off by consumption on the 27th of February, 1801, in the twenty-second year of his age, when he had just entered upon a medical practice at Wattisfield, in Suffolk. That event seemed to happen again in the instance of the relative who now, under circumstances so similar, echoed the noble strain of the christian poet.

The last illness of Mr. Wilton Parker was of short duration, but sufficiently protracted to afford evidence that, as the fear of God had been the predominating principle of his previous conduct, he was enabled, in the near approach of death, to rejoice in that gospel which encourages the awakened sinner to trust in the divine mercy through Jesus Christ, at the same time that it enforces perpetual obligations to holiness from the noblest motives. His parents and other relatives rejoiced that they could, without hesitation, inscribe upon his tomb such sentiments as the following :—

“ Where is thy victory, death?—the christian sleeps,  
How sweetly ! where his Saviour slept before ;  
And o’er his dust, though chastened nature weeps,  
Faith spreads her shield, and hope’s strong pinions soar.

“ But the freed spirit!—far beyond thy power  
He views that living Saviour, face to face,  
And waits, in present bliss, that better hour  
Of perfect union, when, complete in grace,  
In glory, and in judgment, Christ shall come,  
Burst every grave, and call the slumberers home !”

While the subject of the present memoir was permitted humbly to look forward to the happiness and purity of another and better world, he often expressed his disapprobation of that prurient curiosity which some writers have indulged

as to the nature of the employments and pleasures of heaven. "It may not," he said, "be wrong; but it is not *wise*." The work of Dr. Dick, mentioned in a former page, appeared to him, he observed, open to this objection. Very much the same remark he made, one day, after he had been speaking of his love of music. From his early youth it had formed one of his chief pleasures, and, without the advantage of instruction, he had acquired some practical knowledge of the science. He was most pleased with those lyric compositions which at once adorn and are adorned by the charm of well adapted harmony. The performance of them lighted up his countenance and intensely moved his spirit. Hence, those who noticed how this natural taste had already become exalted and consecrated by the infusion of christian principles, could not help expressing the thought that, if there were music in heaven, it would be one of his highest subordinate enjoyments. He acquiesced in the remark, but repeated his conviction that it was "better not to *speculate* on such subjects." On being reminded, however, that this was no matter of speculation, since we have, even now, the words of the sacred hymn, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain"—he replied, very earnestly, "Yes;—that is a delightful certainty indeed!"

“Some time in July,” says the kind attendant before mentioned, “I was summoned hastily to his sick room. A long and severe fit of coughing had shaken the tottering tenement to its base, and had effected, in the space of an hour, the ravages of many days of his ordinary decline. He was stretched powerless on his bed ; but his mind was untouched. Stooping over him, I whispered, ‘Flesh and heart seem to be failing, dear Nathaniel ; but I trust you can, in some measure, say, The Lord is the strength of my heart and my portion for ever.’ His reply was, in a faint tone, ‘I trust I can, in a small degree.’ I rejoined, ‘Are you placing your hopes for eternity on Christ alone ?’ He raised his head from his pillow, fixed his eyes upon me, and said, with much emphasis, ‘I *hope* so ; I am *sure* I have *no other* hope.’

“From that day he never attempted to rise from his bed, but meekly and even cheerfully yielded to his increasing debility. He often noticed the little alleviations he experienced ; sometimes expressing, as a medical man, his grateful surprise that they should be what they were, such as easy breathing, long intervals between the fits of coughing, and at times the power of lying on his side. His appetite improved ; and he remarked, that in his malady this was often the case, and tended much to



soothe the patient when other symptoms more painful began to prevail. I observed how gentle were the dealings of God with his frail creatures ; adding, ‘ I have sometimes thought, in that hour so much dreaded by many, and to nature so fearful, when the struggles of dissolution take place, it may be the suffering is not equal to the seeming strife : I do not mean to take into the account the abounding and overbalancing support which the christian so often receives.’ He replied with much calmness, and looking earnestly at me, ‘ I have no fear as to the *article of dying*, if I could but feel assured that all is safe *beyond* the grave.’

“ Though his habitual reserve on these subjects never entirely left him, it was easy to draw him out, and often to obtain the state of his mind as to his own prospects. I believe he had very just and humble views of himself. He told me that although he had not violated morality nor scoffed at religion, he had been too much absorbed in his profession. *That* had been the almost exclusive object of his thoughts and efforts. He spoke of his intimacy with Mr. L—— and the christian and friendly notice of Mr. Burnet as having been a salutary check upon him ; but distinctly and repeatedly owned the *especial* goodness of God in having taken

from him all hope and all desire to return to the world and its flattering prospects.

“ He long continued to *read* the Bible himself; and when this was too much for him he had a pamphlet, intituled ‘Scripture Truths,’ laid by his side, and read a text as he could bear it.

“ I generally took my station in his room about ten o’clock, daily, in silence; and it was very touching to hear him, as he gradually roused himself from the stupor of opium, inquire, ‘Are you here, aunt?—are you at leisure? will you be kind enough to read to me in the Bible?’ In this way we went through David’s penitential psalms and those on affliction, many passages in Isaiah and Jeremiah, portions of the gospels, Romans, Ephesians, Hebrews and the Revelation. Many passages were read over and over again as they seemed especially to impress, or enlighten, or comfort him. Although he was thus enabled to form an acquaintance with the sacred volume more extensive than in many cases of affliction is permitted, his reading was not superficial; he heard with strict attention and self-application, expressing great anxiety that the holy scriptures should be read to him *very* slowly. On the question being asked, on one occasion, ‘Can you follow me?’ he said, ‘Yes, I can follow you; but I like to *think*

about *every verse*.' Sometimes he would remark on what was read; particularly and with evident pleasure on those passages which distinctly exhibit the efficacy of the atonement, the free grace of God, the aids of the Spirit, and the simplicity but necessity of *faith* to receive these comforting doctrines, so invaluable to the humbled and penitent sinner. To this scripture reading was sometimes added a hymn; and a similar plan was pursued in the afternoon or evening when he was equal to it.

"On my return from public worship I generally gave him the heads and such fragments of the sermon as I could recollect, which always seemed pleasant to him. On one of these occasions I told him Mr. H—— had remarked that he did not think christians dwelt enough, in their contemplations, on the various and unutterable *sufferings* of the Saviour previous to his exclamation, 'It is finished!' He seemed much impressed with this observation, and the next morning, when I asked him to name the passage of scripture he would prefer, he replied, 'If you please, I should like to go regularly through the account of our Saviour's sufferings and death, in each of the gospels, including those beautiful conversations with his disciples, recorded by John.' This we accomplished, and then read a large portion of the epistle to the Hebrews, as

intimately bearing on the subject. The divine nature of Christ, the infinite value of his sacrifice, and his office as intercessor, were the themes that touched him most closely and led the most to personal application.

“A few days before his death he had been listening to the twenty-third psalm. At the last verse, he repeated, with much earnestness, ‘Surely goodness and mercy have followed me all the days of my life;’ adding, after a pause, with great solemnity, ‘*Shall* I dwell in the house of the Lord for ever?’ This psalm he asked his brother to read to him again and again.

“A day or two after this, I repeated to him—

‘A guilty, weak, and helpless worm,  
On thy kind arms I fall;  
Be thou my strength and righteousness,  
My JESUS, and my all!’

He said that *quite* suited him, and asked me to find the hymn of which it formed a part. It was many times read to him at his request.

“The tranquillity of his mind and manners was unruffled, so that he often noticed calmly the increasing tokens of decay. One day, on his complaining of numbness in his arm, I offered to rub it, but with a mournful smile he remarked, ‘It would be of no use; it is only one

of the signs that the poor machine is almost worn out and just ready to stand still.'

"His patience and thankfulness never failed. In acknowledgment of the slightest attentions he still whispered, 'Thank you,' or, 'Very nice,' or, 'Gently done.' Though he dozed much, and his mind sometimes wandered, yet if the moment were well chosen, two or three texts or a verse of a hymn, repeated slowly in the usual voice, would arrest his attention and occasionally elicit a very pleasing remark, indicating that he was still relying, with unshaken confidence, on an almighty Saviour's atonement and intercession."

Although he had become extremely feeble, the general absence of restlessness confirmed his frequent assurance that he felt no acute pain. A reference to the alleviations he had experienced, both bodily and mental, elicited from him the remark, "Bodily afflictions are sent by our *Father*—sent for our good; *he* sends them and *he* removes them." And when their influence upon the state of the mind was noticed more expressly, and the idea suggested that there was much mercy to be discerned and recognised in his having been preserved, amidst the snares and temptations of London and his profession, from vices which would have rendered the heart less susceptible of salutary

impressions—he raised himself upon his elbow, and said, with energy, that in those respects neither London nor the profession had proved any temptation to him; intimating however at the same time that, in reference to the foundation of his eternal hopes, he regarded “as nothing” his outward morality apart from the religion of the heart and the Saviour’s merits.

The last scene is thus given by the correspondent whose pen has contributed so largely to the recent pages of this memoir:—

“On the morning of the day on which he died I said, ‘There is little left, my dear Nathaniel, that *we* can do, but pray that it may please God to soften and shorten the pains of dying.’ He clasped his hands and slowly and distinctly rejoined, ‘Lord! *shorten* the pains of dying!’ With eagerness he put out his lips, to kiss his mother, and turning his head and holding out his hand to his brother Alfred, he said with effort—still employing the tender appellation of their childhood—*Appety! dear Appety!* These were evidently intended as farewell tokens. Half an hour after, I whispered to him, ‘Into thy hands I commit my spirit—thou hast redeemed me, O Lord God of truth!’ He bowed his head gently and whispered in reply, ‘Thank you; a sweet text indeed!’ Once more

seeing him, as I thought, fix his eyes on me as if perplexed, I inquired, ‘Do you know me dear Nathaniel?’ He slowly and with difficulty answered, gazing full at me, ‘I know you.’ These were, I believe, the last words he uttered. But the mind apparently remained unruffled. His feeble attempts to cough ceased. His posture, assumed voluntarily, was that of one conscious death was near, and calmly resigning himself to the summons. One hand supported his cheek; the other lay upon his chest, which heaved laboriously with the effort of the lungs about to close their long impeded functions. His brow was serene. His eyes slowly turned upon his brother Alfred, who stood by his bedside. No feature was disturbed. The breath grew fainter, and the moans more feeble, till they ceased altogether, increasing in this respect alone the solemn stillness of the chamber of death. His mother, F——, and myself, with Alfred, had been for more than an hour the silent spectators of this touching and profitable scene. We gazed and watched on, many minutes, in continued silence, not, I trust, without a well grounded hope that the departed spirit had found pardon and peace through the blood of the Lamb!”

The character of our departed friend was not



tinctured with that sickly sentimentalism which neglects the claims of the living for unprofitable musing among the relics of the dead ; but he had no sympathy with the proud philosophy or the heartless affectation which professes to disregard all that concerns the body after its dissolution. He had more than once expressed his concurrence in the idea that

“ Nature speaks within the human bosom,  
And, spite of reason, bids it look beyond  
This narrow verge of being, and provide  
A decent residence for its clayey shell,  
Endeared to it by time.”

During his residence at Macclesfield—his most distant home—he had selected a spot in the churchyard of Gawsworth, where he desired, if he had died in that part of the kingdom, to have been interred ; and in his last illness he several times mentioned the subject. Tranquilly looking forward to the time when the place where he had first listened to the preaching of the gospel would become his last long home, he explained precisely in what part of the burial ground at Denton he would have wished his remains, had it been practicable, to have been deposited—where there would have been overhanging trees, “ those fading beauties whose roots being buried in dishonour shall rise again in glory”—and where

“ the poor hind,  
Unlettered as he is, would scorn to invade  
The silent resting-place of death.”

He was interred near a younger sister and other members of his family. Those who had been the friends and companions of his youth found a mournful pleasure in joining the train of relatives at his funeral. Some of them sang, with much feeling and sweetness, that beautiful hymn, by Doddridge, beginning,

“ Jesus ! we own thy sovereign hand,  
Thy faithful care we own ;  
Wisdom and love are all thy ways,  
When most to us unknown.”

The service was conducted, and the grief unfeignedly shared by Mr. Hickman, who, also on a subsequent sabbath preached, in reference to the event, a discourse founded on Romans v. 1. “ Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ”—a passage very descriptive of the foundation on which the deceased had rested his eternal hope, and of the consolation he had found.

Anxious to render the occasion one of usefulness to the sorrowing relatives, as well as to a sincerely sympathizing congregation, the beloved minister dwelt with solemnity upon the

utter hopelessness of man's attempt to obtain justification in the sight of God, by the works of the law, and upon the importance of a cordial reception of the scripture doctrine of justification by faith—that great truth which still lies, as it did in Paul's time, at the very foundation of the spiritual building, and of which Luther, in the hand of God its able advocate, speaks as *the* truth by which the gospel of Christ stands or falls. If there be not a full regard to this doctrine, all will be wrong at last ; we may be pleased with many things in ourselves ; in our conduct towards others there may appear to be nothing to reprove ; and yet as it respects God, we may be destitute of “ a good hope.” Hence the necessity of coming to the word of God, as the only unerring standard ; of trying ourselves by the spotless purity of his law ; of checking the first rising of self-righteousness ; and of resting alone on Christ, and seeking to glorify him—like the apostle who, from his conversion to his ascension to glory, had but one theme—“ Christ crucified.”

And then the happy effect of this justification was pointed out—“ peace with God ;” implying reconciliation to his favour, the enjoyment of his love, communion with him, hope in his mercy, calmness of mind, a peace which the most severely tried christian finds greater than

all the pleasures of the world—a peace not with man only—although to an amiable mind it is delightful to be at peace with men—“peace with *God*”—the peace “which passeth all understanding.”—A blessing which flows through Christ; he opened the way for it, and invites to its participation. Multitudes who never found peace elsewhere have found it at the foot of the cross. All the *real* happiness in the world is in the possession of the servants of Christ. Many, indeed, there are who find a pretended peace in the ways of sin and self-righteousness. They are miserably dreaming; and the day is coming when their minds must be awakened; but the slighted messenger of peace will not be found.

Yet, lest any should pervert this doctrine, the remark was added, in passing, that the blessings of justification and sanctification are never separated. All who belong to Christ are like Christ; they do his will; they live to his glory. But those who imagine that because they rest on his merits they may yield to sin and temptation are the worst of deceivers, doing immense injury to their own souls and to the souls of others. They alone honour the doctrine of the gospel who seek constantly to adorn it with a life of holiness.

A more particular notice, from which some extracts have been already given, of him whose

death had occasioned the service, was concluded by aspirations and suggestions such as these :—  
“ May you, my esteemed friends, called to mourn over the departure of such a child, be enabled to bless God ! And, my young friends, the relations—and many other friends—may you meet him in glory ! But O, see that you be in the right path. Be decided—pray much—read the word of God—prize his ordinances—fear the world and sin—walk humbly—grow in grace—think much of eternity : some of you may be upon its borders, and none of us can be very far distant. The Lord give you the best gift—his own rich grace—and bring you to the best end, even life everlasting !”

Such, in brief outline, were the reflections and counsels uttered with deep sincerity by him whose kindness had in no small degree secured the affection, and aided in the moral and intellectual training of the deceased. He would have shrunk from a comparison with one so wise and holy, and the noblest element of whose character was in himself too tardily developed. But it may be remarked that Mr. Parker strongly resembled him in the natural sweetness and thoughtfulness of his disposition ; while the amiable qualities and habits of intellectual improvement which formed the basis of their mutual regard, were fostered, on the part

of Mr. Hickman, by willing assistance as well as by example and by precept. The inquiring and teachable found him a most valuable friend. Diligent in the acquisition of knowledge, and judicious in its use, he passed the greater part of his life in conversing with the good and illustrious of all ages, and laid up an abundant store of information which it delighted him to render useful to others. Though fond of retirement and somewhat pensive, he was not ascetic or morose. His gravity was occasionally tempered by innocent humour ; and his keen relish for intellectual pursuits was by no means narrow in its range, though always kept in subordination to the paramount claims of religion and the soul.

At the same village in which Nathaniel Parker was at school, his honoured pastor had, many years before, been a school-boy too. The seriousness which then prompted him to be foremost in voluntary plans for the spiritual improvement of himself and his fellow pupils, afterward led him to choose the ministry of the gospel as the business of his life, and especially to promote, by every means in his power, the general culture and best interests of the young. He was always ready to appreciate and encourage every indication of simple adherence to duty, of meekness, peaceableness, and charity ;

of humility, patience, and thankfulness ; for these were congenial to his soul. But above all things, he desired that those who were within reach of his influence should be partakers of true godliness—the surest foundation of whatsoever things are true, and honest, and just, and pure, and lovely, and of good report.

The great doctrine that “ Christ died for our sins,” was proclaimed by Mr. Hickman as the only and all-sufficient ground of hope for the guilty children of men. And the same remedy which he exhibited to others was the exclusive object of his own dependance. He, if any, might have had confidence in ancestral piety, early consecration to God, attractive qualities, and a life devoted to the noblest of human avocations. And indeed he possessed, in the retrospect of many years spent in the Redeemer’s service, a great advantage ; but like the apostle, he counted all those things, which were gain to him, “ loss for Christ.” There was, in his view, but one Saviour for the experienced believer and for the trembling suppliant of the eleventh hour. When enfeebled by sickness, he still regarded all the dealings of his heavenly Father as the expressions of infinite compassion to the unworthy. “ It is all mercy,” he said, “ *all mercy.*” And referring to the ground of his hope—“ I wish to die at the foot



of the cross.”—“Yes—all is peace.” It was observed, that of late, he had evinced a remarkable meetness for heaven, and that “it seemed as if no peace less than that from above could be gentle enough for his meek and quiet spirit.”

On a tablet erected by the young persons of his congregation, it is recorded, with equal elegance and truth, that “during the thirty-six years of his ministry he faithfully preached the gospel of Christ, and adorned its doctrines by his lovely and holy life;” and that “having lived amidst the affections of his people, he died amidst their tears.” This event occurred on the 31st of October, 1841—the anniversary of the death of that friend in connexion with whose cherished memory this slight notice would fain contribute to embalm his own.

A celebrated authoress, marking the precarious tenure of human joy, hastens to put a period to her touching narrative lest she should be compelled to add to it some fresh incident of sorrow. The digression which has now been indulged leads the way to woes which “tread each other’s heel.”

Little more than a year had elapsed from the death of Mr. Parker, before one of his sisters had found a resting-place by his side, and the tomb had closed over the remains of his tender

mother and indefatigable nurse. She had enjoyed superior early advantages ; and possessing good abilities in union with much timidity and habits of patient industry, her chosen sphere had long been the retirement of home. There the affections of her heart expanded towards her large family, and the playful and intelligent vivacity which distinguished her manners and conversation were associated with the anxiety, responsibilities, and intense affection of the wife and the mother. Though she courted seclusion, her mind and manners retained to the last a grace and polish which would have adorned a more conspicuous station. Her benevolent heart prompted a liberality and sympathy that rendered her truly the friend of the poor, the helpless, and the afflicted. On religious subjects her extreme reserve made it impossible to ascertain what was passing in the depths of her heart ; but, could it have been more fully unveiled, there is reason to believe the disclosure would not have diminished the regard of those who knew her best. In a letter to an intimate friend, written a month before her decease, alluding to the nature and probable termination of her malady, she remarked, " I desire to lie quietly and confidingly in his hands who doeth all things well, and who will give me strength according to his promise." That promise, on

which she thus humbly reposed, was fulfilled in her; she was spared extreme suffering; her mind seemed to be kept in perfect peace, until, on the 7th of December, 1842, she calmly “fell asleep in Jesus,” to awake up in his likeness, and to join the purified spirit of that first-born son whom she had cherished with all a mother’s care, and over whose cold and forsaken form she had bent with all a mother’s inextinguishable fondness.

A plain grave-stone bears the statement that Mr. Parker died “in his thirtieth year,” and the following lines, designed to console the hearts and excite the gratitude of friends, not to cherish the confidence of the procrastinating sinner.

“Life rose with ardent hopes :—but he who knew  
Life’s hidden snares, put forth a father’s hand,  
With gentle violence his child withdrew  
From earth’s fair scenes, and showed a brighter land ;  
Touched by such love, he blessed the chastening rod,  
He died in faith—he lives to dwell with God.”

It has been remarked of him whose history has now been imperfectly narrated, that his character was of too uniform a tone to admit of interesting delineation ; it was all sunshine—a thing to be felt and appreciated rather than described. Wherever he went, and whatever the relation in which he was placed, he was beloved by all,

and all wondered how soon and how truly they had become attached to him. He did not manifest, in undue predominance, the force of any master-passion; nor was the loveliness of his virtues heightened by contrast with any conspicuous failings. But he was distinguished by an assemblage of lineaments not frequently found united in an individual. There was neither the glare of any one prevailing ray, nor the bold relief of shade, but rather an uncoloured light, the result of many distinct beauties blended in fit proportion, and shedding sweetness on every hand.

Those who knew him best and longest can tell if this representation be overcharged. They can recal to mind the intelligence which beamed from his eye and sat upon his brow; the modest teachableness ever indicating and imparting a charm to his mental powers; the simplicity which mingled with his natural refinement; the disinterested regard to the convenience and gratification of others which redeemed his every pursuit from the taint of selfishness; the sensibility and gratitude which never permitted him to forget a friend or neglect a well meant kindness; the contentment which even his most ardent aspirings scarcely diminished; his sincerity and uprightness; his unbending decision and scrupulous adherence to every promise he

had made ; his generous and bland charity, prompt to shelter another's failings and slow to assail them, thinking no evil, believing all things, hoping all things. These qualities, which would have graced any station, were associated with a rigid frugality of time, an insatiable thirst for knowledge, and an earnest perseverance which prompted him to rise above mediocrity and enabled him to do so. For the medical profession he was especially fitted by a perpetual flow of kindness and cheerfulness, united, on the one hand, with a prudence and caution which would take nothing for granted, and on the other, with a decision and firmness which hastened to carry out the views he had, by personal investigation, ascertained and adjudged to be correct.

There was, however, one predominant feature in his character. The obvious inclination of many minds is to sink into ignorance and sloth. It was the natural tendency of his to rise and expand. But his ambition was a desire to be enlightened rather than an anxiety to shine. Very far was it from a mere hankering after admittance into a higher grade of society. He once said he would never "try to be a gentleman"—which in great measure explains how it was that, possessing in his nature the inherent ingredients of politeness, he always acted like

one. It was to be on a level with the aristocracy of mind that he aspired. He could enter fully into the sentiment which he placed in the opening page of his volume of manuscript extracts:—“Of how much pure and exalted enjoyment is he ignorant who never entertained, as angels, the bright emanations of loftier intellect than his own! By habitual communion with superior spirits, we not only are enabled to think their thoughts, speak their dialects, feel their emotions, but our own thoughts are refined, our common feelings are elevated, and though we may never attain their standard, yet by keeping company with them we shall rise above our own, as trees growing in the society of a forest are said to draw each other up into shapely and stately proportion, while field and hedge-row stragglers, exposed to all weathers, never reach their full stature, luxuriance, or beauty.” The figure may be carried further without impairing the analogy; how often does the growth thus stimulated and vigorous become the harbinger and the cause of premature decay! It was so in the case before us. This eagerness to excel produced its own ruin. Every incentive to exertion hastened the result; and moral and intellectual beauties seemed but as a garland decking the victim for the altar, where

“Science self destroyed her favourite son.”

It is the most momentous consideration of life that we are to die. To ennoble and cement the most graceful combination of natural qualities, and, above all, to fit their possessor for that event, there needs to be added the reigning and pervading influence of religion. "There may be all these," it was justly remarked in the funeral sermon for Mr. Parker, "and yet the heart estranged from God ; no exercise of faith, no power of holy love excited and kept alive by a Saviour's grace. Jesus once met with a lovely young person ; he looked upon him and loved him ; and yet that youth seems to have fallen short of heaven." Christianity recognises and approves and cherishes every desirable moral lineament, and yet dismisses the candidate for eternal life, if we have no other title, with the solemn intimation, "One thing thou lackest." Radiant even in its ruin, the soul unrenewed by divine grace, resembles a mirror broken to fragments, incapable of being restored by any human art to its greatest utility and its original design. Omnipotence alone can accomplish its renovation and fit it again to reflect undistorted and unobscured the image and glory of God.

It is a humiliating view of man's nature. But let conscience bear witness. He who, in the spirit of meek and prayerful self-examination, turns his thoughts inward, may perhaps discover



that, while to others he has been exhibiting an exemplary demeanour, his heart has not been "right in the sight of God." He may find there benevolence alloyed with vanity or self-love, a regard to relative duties mingled with idolatry of the creature—in short, every moral deformity assuming the shape and laying claim to the name of some seemingly analogous virtue. All that he once supposed to be so harmless is infected with sin. Acquaintances have often lightly pronounced him to be possessed of "a good heart," and yet he is constrained to admit and lament that it is more "desperately wicked" than he could have believed had he not become convinced also that it is "deceitful above all things." There may be lovely natural dispositions on which he may fondly delight to linger and repose; but there are only faint traces of the soul's pristine glory. If there be pleasant fruits they are comparatively wild and scanty; not the "fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ unto the glory and praise of God." It is a wilderness still, and not an Eden.

Such is the striking testimony of the foregoing narrative. Let the estimate of a moral and useful life, formed in the season of health and vivacity, be contrasted with the exclusive confidence in the Saviour's merit evinced in the near prospect of death. At the former period

there was no ardour but for this life, and no fear as to the future; at the latter, besides Christ there is "no other hope." Then, they who earnestly contended for "the faith once delivered to the saints," were "graceless zealots;" now, no other contest, in comparison with this, is deemed worthy of an immortal being. If the lustre of natural attributes could have lighted up the dark valley, he whom we have contemplated had never had his brow clouded with a doubt or his heart invaded by a fear. And yet how great the change! "Old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." He feels that he is a sinner in the sight of God; that his whole life has been a course fraught with forgetfulness of his wisest, best, omnipotent friend, and of rebellion against him who justly claimed his entire allegiance and love. Kindly feelings, benevolent deeds, freedom from many forms of moral turpitude, mental superiority and acquirements, cease to be regarded as affording a passport to future happiness. He perceives that he has been in imminent danger of gaining the honour and prosperity of the world and losing his own soul. His heaviest physical affliction is welcomed as the greatest of all his mercies, since it has been the means of leading him to abandon his "own righteousness which is of the law" and to seek the possession of "that which

is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith."

Can it, in the exercise of candour and sobriety, be contended that this renewed state of mind was mere fanaticism? It may safely be asserted that the individual in question was free from such an infirmity; and this statement receives a signal illustration in the natural steadiness of his mind, in the reserve and caution he evinced on religious subjects during his last illness, and in the fact that in his conversations on those subjects no expression ever escaped his lips indicating that the intellect had lost, even for an instant, its supremacy over the imagination.

Nor can the inference from the story of his career be evaded by supposing that he was the victim of sectarian prejudice. Alluding to his choice of a pastor at Macclesfield he made use of these expressions:—"You will at once say that I have forsaken the faith of my forefathers; but do not judge rashly; the faith of our forefathers and the faith of *all christians* of the present day are alike, I feel confident. They have the same soil, the same root, the same nourishment, whether in the gothic edifice or the humble meeting-house." And there were numerous proofs that, in the nearer view of death, religion commended itself to the judgment of his unimpaired intellect as an affair in

importance infinitely above all denominational peculiarities, and that *these* he justly regarded as of slight account, except as they are connected with the essential truths of the gospel, and tend to promote or retard its individual reception, or its universal spread.

If, then, it be true that even eminently attractive characters still need to be invested with the seamless robe of the Saviour's righteousness, let not these pages be so perverted as to give confidence to any by whom the claims of religion are admitted, but postponed. Faint and trembling would have been the hope respecting our departed friend, had he died when, from the absorbing pursuit of worldly eminence, he was first plunged into the stupor of disease. And although his subsequent affliction afforded wider space for repentance and numerous evidences of its reality, yet no false charity must be permitted to conceal the danger of having until that time neglected "so great salvation." "Charity to the dead," it has been observed, "is often destruction to the living, and it is with the latter exclusively that we have to do. The departed cannot be injured or even annoyed by any judgment of ours, however uncharitable; whereas our favourable opinion concerning them may induce others to go and do likewise—to trifle with Christ and eternity till

health and life are almost gone, and then, when the world can charm no longer, to compromise matters with their Creator as best they may."

Tenderness towards surviving relatives has usually buried in silence the cases, in which attractive social qualities, habits of dissipation, or midnight studies, have led the way to an early death connected with unutterable remorse and deep despair, and there is reason for great thankfulness when survivors do not thus sorrow as those who have no hope. Yet death occurring in the midst of life, even under mitigated circumstances, loudly calls upon those whose minds are intent upon the cares and occupations of the present state, to "seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness," and stamps with ineffable folly him who is providing only for the meat that perisheth and the garment that waxeth old, regardless of the summons which, ere another morning dawn, may arouse him, at once from his natural and his spiritual slumber, amid the awful realities of the eternal world.

Glancing again at the character which the foregoing pages have attempted to delineate, let the question be fairly entertained—whether the postponement of the great affair of life was attended by any advantage? If vital religion had obtained possession of the soul at an earlier period, would it have expelled any real virtue

or excellence? Must diligence and uprightness fail because their possessor is "fervent in spirit, serving the Lord," and constantly influenced by a desire to be "holy as God is holy?" Will humility and thankfulness decline, because the mind is bowed down with a heavy sense of unworthiness, and all the gifts of Providence are regarded as flowing from the source of "every good and perfect gift?" Is contentment less sincere when associated with godliness and sustained by the conviction that "all things work together for good to them that love God?" Does a man's trust in an all-wise Providence become less firm or safe when he has cast the care of his eternal destiny upon him, who not only numbers the hairs of the head, but is the Father of the spirit? Would such an one be less urbane and generous because in the school of Christ he had learned to be "pitiful and courteous," and to "esteem others better than himself?" Would he manifest by the sick-bed of a fellow-creature less of humanity and kindness, if he had first sought for himself the "balm of Gilead and the physician there," and thus been prepared to point others to the leaves of that tree "which is for the healing of the nations?" Would his mind have been narrowed, or his affections damped, by oft

renewed and prolonged communion with infinite intelligence and love?

We do not speak of those in whom the natural depravity of the human heart is producing its appropriate fruits in all their unchecked wildness. To them it were indeed a gain to cast away the forbidden thing which, they well know, turns to bitter ashes on the palate, and to taste the blessedness of "a conscience void of offence towards God and towards man."

But let none rest in vain confidence upon the average quality of their outward conduct. Let not the world's approving smile nor any exhibition of merely moral qualities delude us into the belief that we are gliding steadily and surely towards the haven of eternal happiness. There is *peril* in this *security*. Rather let us examine our true bearing with vigilance and care. Fixing the contemplation upon a test loftier and less fallible than any human judgment, and ever seeking the safe guidance of the Holy Spirit, let us inquire whether there may not be an under-current in our thoughts, desires, motives, and affections, altogether adverse to our apparent course, and in unconscious obedience to which we may be even now drifting towards irremediable ruin.









